

Colleagues Share Advice on Practice-Building

Monica Mortenson, OD, was looking for a few good ideas to help her build her one-year-old, Boulder, Colo., practice. She had heard that the ALLDocs annual meeting provided practice management advice, CE, a terrific venue and fun, so she thought it would be worthwhile. "I wanted to learn how to attract more patients and how to advertise with social networking. I also hoped I would hear about coding and billing, as well as find an overview of new technology," she says.

She found all that and more. As a result of attending the presentations and spending time with colleagues

and vendors, Dr. Mortenson returned to her practice with several ideas to jumpstart her second year.

◆ **Social networking:** Dr.

Mortenson will become more active on her web site, altitudeoptometry.com, her Facebook page and in monitoring consumer review sites like Yelp! She recently posted some impressions from hearing **Dean Ornish, MD**, speak at the ALLDocs meeting.

◆ **Adjusting fees:** Even

though she's in a college town, she feels that her fees are too low. So she's working on revising her contact lens professional fees.

◆ **Medical visits:** Dr. Mortenson

accepts a variety of medical insurances, and the full list is posted on her web site. She is analyzing what additional diagnostic equipment she can add. Top on her list is a retinal camera.

What struck Dr. Mortenson most about the ALLDocs meeting was how friendly and helpful her colleagues were. "[ALLDocs board member] **Dr. [Bill] Fox** handed me a three-page action plan for steps I can take to build the practice," she says. "These doctors have all been through this point where I am now. I appreciate their advice, and it's also nice to see how well they're doing."

Dr. Mortenson joined LensCrafters after having worked as an associate in

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Dr. Mortenson

Improve Contact Lens Compliance by Educating Patients

Long-time contact lens wearers even more likely to develop bad habits, OD says

"Never make the assumption that long-time contact lens wearers are following your directions," says **Daraius Unwalla, OD**,

who has two LensCrafters-affiliated practices in Northern Virginia. "Don't treat your established patients any differently from your first-time patients

when it comes to educating them on contact lens compliance."

Dr. Unwalla says that the long-time contact lens wearers are likely to slip into bad habits, such as topping off their contact lens solutions, forgetting to clean or replace their contact lens cases and stretching their wearing times. That's why he, his associate ODs and his staff emphasize the care regimen every time, with every patient.

Dr. Unwalla likes to ask questions that will get at the truth, not those to which the patient can give a one-word

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Dr. Unwalla

Share Your Knowledge

Dr. Daraius Unwalla has been a regular attendee of ALLDocs meetings for several years, calling them the most valuable meetings of the year. "When I return from a meeting, I promote it to my patients. That makes them feel that they're receiving new information," he says. For example, one of the speakers talked about chlorine-resistant bacteria. Dr. Unwalla realized that many of his patients are washing their hands but not drying them before inserting their contact lenses. "So now I tell everyone, 'This is new data I just learned about at a conference. Now we want you to dry your hands before you pick up a contact lens,'" he says. "By sharing my new knowledge, patients are seeing me as more of an expert." ■

CL Compliance

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answer. For example, rather than ask, "Do you sleep in your contact lenses?" he asks, "How many days on average do you keep your lenses on without taking them off at night?" Patients are likely to provide a truthful answer. "That's the opening to talk about how patients really are using and caring for their contact lenses," he says.

The practice uses contact lens flow sheets for their contact lens patients. It's their way of tracking which brands of contact lenses they've tried and how they've performed for that patient. It also lists the contact lens

solution recommended at the most recent visit. One of his first questions to patients is what solution they're using. If they say, "The green bottle," he'll pull out a laminated brochure from Alcon that shows the contact lens solutions available in green bottles. He'll ask them to point to the one they're using, and if they aren't absolutely certain it's OPTI-FREE® RepleniSH® MPDS, he'll review why he recommended it.

The one-minute recommendation is essentially the same as the one he provides to new contact lens patients. OPTI-FREE® RepleniSH MPDS is very effective, it works with silicone hydrogel and all soft contact

lenses, and patients find that their contact lenses stay comfortable. He also tells patients not to switch solutions on their own and not to switch to a store-brand solution. "We don't use the term 'generic' because many people think generic formulas are the same as the brand names. So we specifically say store-brand or private-label solutions," he says.

"We tell patients that store-brand solutions can change frequently. 'If I'm not aware of the solution you are using, it may be difficult for me to address any issues you may be experiencing.'" He also displays a bottle of one of the store-brand, green-box solutions next to the OPTI-FREE® RepleniSH® MPDS box. "I want them to see that just looking for the green box is not enough. They need to remember this name."

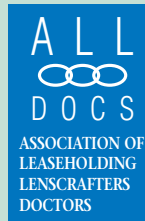
Dr. Unwalla provides a starter kit to new patients or those who have strayed away from his recommendation, and he'll give a coupon to compliant patients so they can save money on the retail-size bottles. ■



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

The Four ALLDocs Goals

While all of us ALLDocs members spend the year trying to grow our practices and increase our efficiency, your ALLDocs board is also working on creating annual meetings that bring us toward our four goals for the group. These are to improve the



health and life of our members, help us improve the health and life of our patients, improve the health of our practices and spend a week living like royalty. Our California meeting met those goals, I believe.

Sessions by **Dean Ornish, MD**; **Murray Fingeret, OD, FAAO**; **Robert Weinreb, MD**; and **Stuart Richer, OD, PhD**,



(l-r): Dr. Gelb and Dr. Ornish

provided food for thought for patient and personal health, but the practice management sessions added even more value. Title sponsor CooperVision presented sessions on social media, search engine optimization and web site enhancement. **Neil Gailmard, OD, FAAO**, and **Dave Ziegler, OD**, focused on the patient experience in our practices. And the resort treated us like kings and queens.

It's not often you can focus so intently on so many different but interlinked facets of your practice, but that is our aim for the ALLDocs meeting. From the feedback we've heard, we believe we managed to accomplish all four goals. So now we'll begin planning the 2011 meeting. Feel free to contact me with ideas and suggestions.

Kerry Gelb, OD
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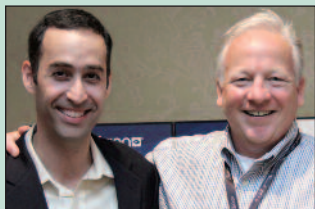
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COOPERVISION GUEST COLUMN

Team CooperVision

By Tom Nicholson
Director of National
Accounts, CooperVision

ALLDocs president **Dr. Kerry Gelb** noted that many companies send representatives to ALLDocs meetings. But CooperVision sent its president, **Dennis Murphy**, and an entire team to the November ALLDocs annual meeting. We believe ALLDocs members deserve to hear about CooperVision's vision, strategy and long-term plan directly from the company president. Our emphasis in building the business through a doctor-



(l-r): Daniel Rostenne and Tom Nicholson

first strategy is sincere, and we believe it will continue to be successful. Many ALLDocs members are leading the way by selecting CooperVision products first for their contact lens patients. As a company, we bring you not only the R&D that results in innovative, high-quality contact lenses, but also strategies to help grow your practice. Trade Marketing Manager, **Garth Bradley**, explained it this way. "We want to bring you value-added services and solutions to challenges



Team CooperVision (l-r): Garth Bradley, Dr. Harvard Sylvan, Tom Nicholson, Dennis Murphy and Paul Soik

you face in your daily practice, such as attracting and retaining patients, enhancing your practice profitability, differentiating your practice and gaining a competitive edge in your local markets." We've been doing our homework on how to use social media to help build your practice, as shown in the four case studies covered in *Facebook, Blogging and Facebook Advertising* at the meeting.

It was evident also when I was introducing members to **Daniel Rostenne** of EyeCarePro, a web site provider that is newly hosting the alldocsod.com web site and is offering ALLDocs members special pricing on practice web site hosting. Rostenne's advice on search engine optimization and social media is available at alldocsod.com.

The CooperVision team wants to understand your priorities. **Dr. Harv Sylvan** surveyed members to learn that the five most important criteria when selecting a contact lens are trial lens availability, customer service/easy exchange policy, profit margins, lens with distinct benefits and value-added services (social media, staff training). We appreciate your insights in the focus group sessions as well.

We at CooperVision thank you for your business in 2010 and ongoing support in 2011 and beyond. ■

Share Advice

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an independent practice and an ophthalmology practice. When she moved to Boulder, she worked in a Sears location about 10 miles away to find out whether she might like a corporate setting. "Boulder is a pretty saturated area. I knew it would not be easy to open cold or even to join an existing practice. But I wanted to work in the city where I live with my family," she says. She liked the Sears setup, and when Luxottica Retail offered her the LensCrafters location a year later, she jumped at the chance. "Now I'm not sure I'd want to practice any other way," she says. ■

California Meeting Gallery



(l-r): Dr. John Magalhaes, presenter Dr. Ziegler and Dr. Gelb



Presenters (l-r): Dr. Weinreb, Dr. Richer and Dr. Fingeret

California Meeting Gallery



At left, ALLDocs board members (l-r): Dr. Gelb, Dr. Bill Fox, Dr. Steve Lutz, Dr. Richard Hults, Ed Zajac of Alcon, Dr. Dale Stein and Dr. Jack McIntyre

At right, golfing foursome (l-r): Dr. Joe Watson of Minneapolis, CooperVision's Tom Nicholson, Dr. Hults and Transitions Optical's Alex Louw

IMPLEMENTING THE TOTAL PATIENT CARE MODEL

The Best Defense Is a Strong Offense

Or is it the other way around?



Dr. Rumpakis

By John Rumpakis, OD, MBA

As another year comes to a close, we need to look back at our successes while looking forward to our opportunities and challenges. In challenging times, it's appealing to seek out alternative methods of producing income. I have strongly advocated practicing the fullest scope

of your licensure and providing state-of-the-art care for your patients, whether that's refractive care, contact lenses or incorporating medical eye care, such as allergy and dry eye. While many have followed my admonitions, some have not learned the proper methods of medical coding and compliance. Providing the care should always be about the patient and not the money. Best put—increased profitability is simply a byproduct of providing the standard of care to your patient and then translating your medical record correctly in terms of the CPT.

The future opportunities that lie before us are immense. As optometrists, we provide about 77 percent of all first-time care to the U.S. population and about 66 percent of enduring care. Translated, that means that the vast majority of people are looking to us for their eye care—both refractive and medical. So as we look forward to building a strong offense and defense—what would be our first steps?

1. Treat the patient, not only the disease. Your patients suffer from many concomitant conditions. Your contact lens patients may need to change

their solutions for better lens biocompatibility, be treated for ocular allergy or have intermittent dry eye issues and meibomian gland dysfunction. You need to address all of these issues with them in a professional, direct and ethical manner. Don't only think about the economics; take care of the patient.

2. Take care of your medical record. With audits on the increase and financial penalties reaching the six-figure mark, it is imperative that your medical record be perfect. Yes, perfect! No whining, no claims of ignorance and no shortcuts. If that means you need to step up to EMR, then do it. This is one of your primary responsibilities.

3. Learn to code your services properly. There are many sources of information on coding today. Some are good, but many are not. Be sure that you get a reference for any policy or recommendation before you put it into action. Be cautious because ultimately you are wholly responsible for your coding.

Build a strong offense by treating your whole patient, whether the patient is there for refractive services, a medical condition or both. Build a strong defense by taking care of your medical record and learning how to translate your intellectual property into CPT codes that accurately reflect the care you provided. You need both for a proper balance. A solid strategy of offense and defense will allow you to come out on top. By embracing these realities, you can thrive and not just survive in today's health care environment. Happy holidays and best wishes for continued success. ■