

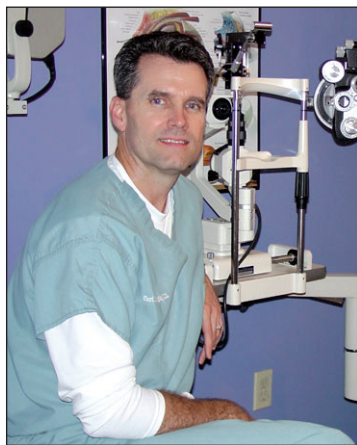


# Treating Allergies an Entry Point to Medical Billing

*Nearly one-third of office visits have medical origin*

“Oklahoma is the mecca of allergies,” says **Curt Massengale, O.D.**, Oklahoma City. There are the expected seasonal allergy sufferers, but because of the wind, “there is always fine particulate junk in the air,” he says. “I’ve seen a lot of patients, especially contact lens wearers, who move here and start experiencing allergy symptoms.”

Dr. Massengale prescribes PATANOL® solution for these patients. PATANOL® solution is indicated for all signs and symptoms of allergies—redness, itching, conjunctival edema, tearing and eyelid swelling. It is also convenient for contact lens wearers because of its twice-a-day dosing. These patients can use PATANOL® solu-



**Dr. Massengale**

tion 10 minutes before inserting their contact lenses at the beginning of the day, and again at the end of the day.

“Every allergy discussion has to do with PATANOL® solution,” says Dr. Massengale. “But in my opinion, the real reason to use PATANOL® solution is because I trust it so much. I trust Alcon, and I trust that drug.”

Prescribing reliable medications is especially important to any practitioner seeking to grow the therapeutic portion of the practice. In Dr. Massengale’s case, he’s been doing medical billing since 1989. “Medical billing is a huge part of our practice. For those who aren’t doing it, I’d suggest it is an untapped resource for practice growth. The

more you can do for the patient, the more reasons the patient will come back to you,” he says.

Treating ocular allergies is a great way to start with medical billing, says Dr. Massengale. “The coding is simple and the treatment is reliable. When you can do something for the patient that makes his or her eyes stop hurting, that patient will appreciate your care even more than if you help that patient see well.”

Dr. Massengale estimates that about 30 percent of his patients have underlying medical conditions. “Of that, there’s a large number who wouldn’t have even walked in my door if I didn’t provide these services. Plus, these medical billing patients also bring in more patients for eye exams. If I treat a patient’s iritis, that patient’s friends and family are going to hear about it,” he says. ■



## Meeting to Be Informative and Fun

This year’s ALLDocs annual meeting in Playa del Carmen, Mexico, Sunday, November 5 through Thursday, November 9, allots additional free time, shorter vendor presentations and an exhibit hall. You can still rely on the remainder of the meeting to be jam-packed with useful information, CE, our annual golf tournament and great group and spouse activities.

At the meeting, all O.D. attendees will receive a \$500 rebate. Look for more information soon. For reservations at the Royal Porto Real resort, call or e-mail **Kim Collings** at 800.233.7790 or [kcollings@travelhouseagency.com](mailto:kcollings@travelhouseagency.com).

Rooms are \$994.00/4 nights single and \$1,368.00/4 nights double and are all-inclusive, meaning all food and beverages, airport transfers, maid and bellman gratuities and taxes are included. Travel insurance for medical emergency cancellations is available for \$29.00 per person. Additionally, Collings can help arrange scheduled flights or she can help you book nonstop charter air from many U.S. gateway cities.

Visit the hotel website at [www.realresorts.com.mx/Royal\\_Porto\\_Real](http://www.realresorts.com.mx/Royal_Porto_Real). ■

# Fusarium Keratitis: What Your Patients Need to Know

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently issued results from an ongoing investigation on *Fusarium* keratitis. In a number of cases of *Fusarium*, in patients who remembered what contact lens solution they were using the month before the infection onset, many reported using a Bausch & Lomb ReNu\* brand multipurpose solution or a generic-brand solution manufactured by Bausch & Lomb.

The CDC wrote, "Measures to reduce the risk for microbial keratitis can be instituted immediately by contact

lens users and include the safe handling, storage, and cleaning of contact lenses. Specifically, contact lens users should wash their hands with soap and water and dry them before handling lenses, wear lenses according to the schedule prescribed by eye care practitioners and solution manufacturers, and follow guidelines for cleaning and storing lenses provided by eye care practitioners and solution manufacturers. Contact lens users with questions about which solutions are best for them should consult their eye care professionals and carefully weigh risks and benefits." (To view the

article in its entirety, go to [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov).)

The CDC posts regular updates on the *Fusarium* keratitis investigation. Visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) and enter *Fusarium* in the search box or go directly to the main *Fusarium* FAQ page: [www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/fungal\\_fusariumKeratitis.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/fungal_fusariumKeratitis.html)

The latest press releases and dispatches are available on that site.

Alcon issued a reminder in April noting that the disinfection agents in OPTI-FREE® EXPRESS® and OPTI-FREE® RepleniSH® MPDS are POLYQUAD® and ALDOX®, unique compounds in a disinfecting system that are totally different from those used in the ReNu\* branded products and

generic products manufactured by Bausch & Lomb. "The POLYQUAD® system has been used in Alcon products for more than 20 years, and has consistently been shown to be highly effective against the *Fusarium* species and other potential ocular pathogens," according to the letter to eye care professionals from Alcon's Vice President for Consumer Products/Clinical Operations, **Ralph Stone, Ph.D.**

A series of tests to demonstrate the effectiveness of OPTI-FREE® EXPRESS® MPDS showed that: Even at high temperatures (50 degrees Celsius), the solution showed a high level of antimicrobial activity, with a 100 percent of the normal log reduction of *Fusarium solani*. In the presence of a contact lens, OPTI-FREE® EXPRESS® MPDS maintained high antimicrobial activity, with a 100 percent of the normal log reduction of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and 88 percent of the normal log reduction of *Staphylococcus aureus*.<sup>1</sup> ■

\*Trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

<sup>1</sup> Ruth A. Rosenthal, et al, Extreme Testing of Contact Lens Disinfecting Products, *Contact Lens Spectrum*, July 2002.



## FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

### The Leading Edge



Dr. Gelb

**O**ptomety has changed. We are the primary medical eye care providers, and we need to practice accordingly. One way to do that is to start, or move farther into, the medical model of billing.

It makes sense to patients, who would prefer to receive most of their eye care services in one location. And it makes sense to our bottom line.

For many of us, however, the problem is getting started. That's where the annual meeting of the Association of LensCrafters Leaseholding Doctors can help.

Join us in Playa del Carmen, Mexico, from November 5 through November 9, for intensive workshops and seminars on the medical model.

We'll work through the process, identifying the diseases most often seen in primary eye care locations such as ours, to understanding what procedures and what billing codes support the diagnosis and treatment of those diseases.

Our goal is to provide enough training so that every LensCrafters leaseholder who wants to start medical billing can do so. In fact, we're even giving away prizes of some equipment used to support a medical model practice.

We're working on securing COPE-approved CE credit hours for some of this training, which will cover medical procedures, updates on ocular diseases and diagnostic equipment, such as external photography, gonioscopy and visual fields.

Join or renew your membership in ALLDocs today, and start making plans to be at this important and informative meeting. See you in Mexico!

Kerry Gelb, O.D.  
[drkmg@comcast.net](mailto:drkmg@comcast.net)



# Starting Out with the Medical Model

*Allergies provide an entry point to medical billing*

One reason practitioners cite for hesitance in moving toward the medical model is that they feel overwhelmed by the learning curve. They don't want to make a mistake in billing and coding, so they say they'll wait until they can learn everything they need to know. But **John Rumpakis, O.D., M.B.A.**, of Practice Resource Management in Lake Oswego, OR, says that approach means they're leaving money on the table. Medical model optometry is not an all-or-nothing proposition. Start with a few services and add to that, he suggests. "Ocular allergy is uncomplicated to diagnose, simple to treat, and our patients love us for relieving their symptoms," he says. Because allergy symptoms are recurrent, these patients also represent an annuity for the practice, he says.



**Dr. Rumpakis**

frequently choose to self-treat to get relief," he says. Good communication is key to helping patients manage these chronic conditions.

"Billing and coding for allergy may be one of the easiest things that we do; so easy, in fact, that we often forget to bill the patient for our services," Dr. Rumpakis says. "The coding aspect for ocular allergy consists of nothing more than an E/M (evaluation and management) visit code in most cases. Most likely the level of the code would be either a two or a three based upon meeting the criterion for

each visit. Additionally, since the patient would most likely be an established patient, the codes used would be 99212 or 99213 matched with an appropriate allergic diagnosis."

He adds that it is important to bring the patient back into the office on visits separate from their general vision exams, thus avoiding problems and confusion regarding their medical vs. vision coverage.

Dr. Rumpakis suggests that coding for a patient presenting with allergy symptoms, assuming appropriate case history, examination and medical decision elements were properly recorded, could look like this:

### Initial Presentation

**Comprehensive Ophthalmological Exam (new patient) . . . . . 92004**  
**Determination of Refractive State . . . . . 92015**

### One-Week Visit

**E/M Problem Focused (established patient) . . . . . 99213**

### Six-Month Visit

**E/M Problem Focused (established patient) . . . . . 99213**

"We must be proactive in managing our patients' care both 'in season' and 'out of season.' Patients are often unaware of the myriad of treatment protocols that exist and therefore most

# The Most Important Number You Might Not Know

*Staff gross-per-hour an indicator of practice health, O.D. says*

Your practice staff might look terrific, always polite and always busy. But are they efficient? **Bill Fox, O.D.**, of Raleigh, NC, says the only way to know is to run a gross-per-hour calculation. It's a number his three practice locations run every month to evaluate the efficiency of the managers. A monthly snapshot allows them to make necessary adjustments quickly.

It's not hard to calculate, he says. Total the gross fees paid—not fees charged—and divided it by the number of non-O.D. hours. An efficient, well-run

office grosses in the \$80 to \$90 range per hour. "If you're in the mid 70s, that's acceptable. You're doing OK, but it can be better," he says. For an even clearer picture, compare your monthly staff gross per hour to the rates of other LensCrafters leaseholders in your area.

A net gross in the \$60 range or lower means that the office can run more efficiently. "Maybe too many people are in the office, or one person is trying to do everything and not delegate," he says. Discuss the numbers with your office manager and set a goal for the en-

tire staff. "I might say, 'Right now, we're at \$71 and I'd like to be at \$80. We don't want to cut hours, but an area we can focus on is to pull in more of the walk-ins,'" Dr. Fox says.

What is most interesting is that talking about these numbers can change the perspective of the office staff. "They may think they're overworked and taking too many patients, but when they learn the numbers are low, they realize they are not working as smart as they



**Dr. Fox**

*Continued on page 4*

**GUEST COLUMN FROM COOPERVISION****Where Is Your Biggest Contact Lens Practice Opportunity?**

By Bob Scott, Senior Director of National Accounts

**H**ow would you answer the question posed in the title of this article? Perhaps you might answer silicone hydrogel materials or new toric lens designs. Actually, in a survey of over 1,000 eye care practitioners in a *Review of Optometry* survey conducted in May 2005, 59 percent of the respondents said fitting more presbyopes was their biggest practice opportunity.

Monovision currently accounts for about 50 percent of all contact lens vision for presbyopia, but multifocal contact lenses are opening a whole new world of possibilities for practitioners and their presbyopic patients. It is estimated that, beginning this year, the majority of contact lens wearers will be 35 years or older. With advances in multifocal lens designs, these patients will be delighted to learn that their presbyopia will no longer prevent them from continuing to enjoy the comfort and convenience of soft contact lenses as they move into their 40s and beyond.

In selecting your multifocal contact lens of choice, it is important to look at many factors. Your multifocal

lens system should provide you the flexibility to not only address your patients' needs today, but also as their conditions progress. Presbyopia inevitably progresses over time, requiring a higher ADD power to parallel the change. CooperVision has a unique solution to this dilemma, allowing the practitioner to avoid this otherwise inevitable visual compromise from the very beginning.



Bob Scott



The CooperVision Total Multifocal Solution line of products

all use the Balanced Progressive Technology fitting system, making it easy for you to fit a wide range of presbyopic patients. One fitting system, one design, and an amazing array of expanded parameters and new materials!

Take advantage of your biggest practice opportunity. To learn more about Balanced Progressive Technology and the products with the Total Multifocal Solution from CooperVision, please contact your area sales manager or email [info@coopervision.com](mailto:info@coopervision.com). Be sure to include your practice name, address and phone number. ■

**Benefits of Membership**

**T**he Association of LensCrafters Leaseholding Doctors has four goals in its mission statement.

They are to:

- enhance the professional and financial aspects of members' practices;
- establish excellent working relationships with LensCrafters;
- establish excellent working relationships with vendors; and
- support the Gift of Sight program. The \$100 annual membership fee

is collected to help the association cover communication costs, legal costs and other costs undertaken on behalf of the membership. Some of these efforts including negotiating with vendors to gain better pricing or insurance coverage, as well as retaining legal counsel for group-wide problems. It's a small price to pay to make sure your voice is heard.

Please complete and return your membership application today. ■

**Important Number**

*Continued from page 3*

could. They all start to think of ways they can increase revenues," he says.

Rarely is it necessary to cut hours, although that might be an option for an inefficient office. More often, people suggest how they can help: take initiative rather than wait for instructions; call to confirm appointments or schedule recalls; schedule a walk-in or convert the phone calls to appointments.

These discussions also help staff understand the importance of contact lenses. Dr. Fox says, "When our productivity is low, the first place we look is to our contact lens portion. That's where we are most productive.

"Besides making sure we are efficient, the easiest way to improve gross is by increasing our contact lens practice," he says. ■

**BREAKING NEWS: Web Site to Launch**

**T**he ALLDocs web site will be ready to launch in July. For national meeting updates, photo galleries, membership applications, surveys and stories about ALLDocs members, visit [www.alldocsod.com](http://www.alldocsod.com). Alcon and CooperVision are sponsoring the web site. ■