



INTRODUCING PREMIUM PRODUCTS AND SERVICES TO PATIENTS



Advice to make you feel more confident about offering this important aspect of clinical care.

BY JESSILIN QUINT, OD, MBA, MS, FFAO

Every patient deserves the best products and services available to maximize their visual needs and enhance their quality of life. A potential caveat, however, is that the best products and services on the market often come at a higher price point than other, non-premium options. How many times do we, as optometrists, shy away from discussing premium products and services because we're either uncomfortable talking about cost, we worry the patient will think we're trying to

sell them something, or we assume they can't afford such options?

Premium products are premium for a reason: They often use the latest technology, are made with superior materials, and/or offer the most modern treatment option on the market. Our patients come to us because we are experts, and they seek our opinion on what is best for their visual needs. Optometrists need to be comfortable discussing all options with patients if we are to deliver the very best eye care. So,

before you recommend a premium product or service, make sure you're up to speed on all the available options, which may require some self-education.

NEVER STOP LEARNING

Education is a continuous process, as new research, technology, and developments are always coming out. The easiest way to educate yourself is to create and maintain relationships with local industry representatives. They want to tell you about their

AT A GLANCE

- ▶ Getting comfortable with discussing premium products and services starts with educating yourself on the options available.
- ▶ Always offer solutions; never act like a salesperson.
- ▶ Patients deserve the best. Never shy away from informing them about all of the options available to them.

products, educate you on the latest launches, and have great information about how other offices are using their goods.

Other educational options include attending exhibit halls at eye care conferences, reading trade journals, participating in webinars, listening to eye care podcasts, talking with colleagues, attending continuing education lectures, and enrolling in hands-on educational workshops.

It is critical to fully understand how a product or service performs, how it works, its different features, what makes it unique, and what the research data say. It is also helpful to have real-life experience with a product or service. This means trying it out yourself or having a team member in your office try it (see *First Person Feedback Is the Best Feedback*). This direct feedback is a great way to see how it could benefit your patients in the real world.

OFFER SOLUTIONS

As optometrists, our job is to listen to our patients, understand their visual problems or goals, and offer solutions to help them. We are eye experts and as such, we know exactly how to solve eye-related issues. This starts with being an active listener. Even if a technician helps take the patient history, I still review with the patient what they are experiencing and make a point to list out their goals at the beginning of their visit. Maybe their goal is to see better in a

certain setting, to have better ocular comfort, or maybe it is to complete their day without having to worry about their eyes or their vision. Take

notes if needed, so you do not forget to recommend solutions for each of their goals and/or problems.

Don't Be a Salesperson

Once you have identified a patient's vision problems or goals, you'll want to educate them about the different solutions available. If a premium product or service is truly the best option, then discuss it with them. Remember, you are not selling; you are helping the patient understand the benefits of the premium products and services that exist. It is ultimately the patient's job, not the optometrist's or a staff

FIRST PERSON FEEDBACK IS THE BEST FEEDBACK

In my office, employees are often the first to try a new product or service before we decide to offer it to patients. I value their honest opinions and want them to be able to talk about it firsthand with patients based on their personal experiences.

Likewise, when a new premium progressive lens design launches, I give my opticians who are candidates the opportunity to try the new lens design themselves. Because one product is never perfect for every person, getting their feedback on the adaptation period, the clarity they experienced, or how the lens affected specific life scenarios can be quite helpful.

I also ask my staff to try new therapies that I introduce into my clinic. When we first brought intense pulsed light technology in, I wanted everyone on the dry eye team who was a candidate to experience a series of treatments. This allowed me to learn more about this service and work out any kinks in the treatment flow. It was also a great way for my team to experience the process for themselves and, in turn, be equipped to answer questions and share their perspective with patients.

It is imperative to educate yourself and your team on the premium products or services you offer.

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member's job, to decide whether they want to make the investment in a premium option.

Even if the patient decides not to opt for the premium product or service, at least you have planted the seed to talk about it again in the future. I have seen this process firsthand with a few of my dry eye patients. At the first visit, some patients are overwhelmed by the sticker shock of premium dry eye

treatment services. I take the time to explain how these services work and the benefits they offer. I send the patient home with information about the premium option and schedule a follow-up visit. In my experience, most patients opt for the premium service at a follow-up visit down the road.

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

As with most skills, practice makes perfect. Imparting information

about premium products and services is a craft that takes time and repetition to master. In the beginning, it takes commitment and consistency to make it a natural part of discussion, but the more you and your staff talk about these topics with your patients, the easier it gets.

I like to put myself in my patients' shoes. If I were going to an expert to solve a problem or help me with a particular goal, I would want to know the very best thing on the market to help me achieve that goal. I might have to sleep on it or budget for it, but I would at least want to be educated about it. That is what most of our patients want, too. ■

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