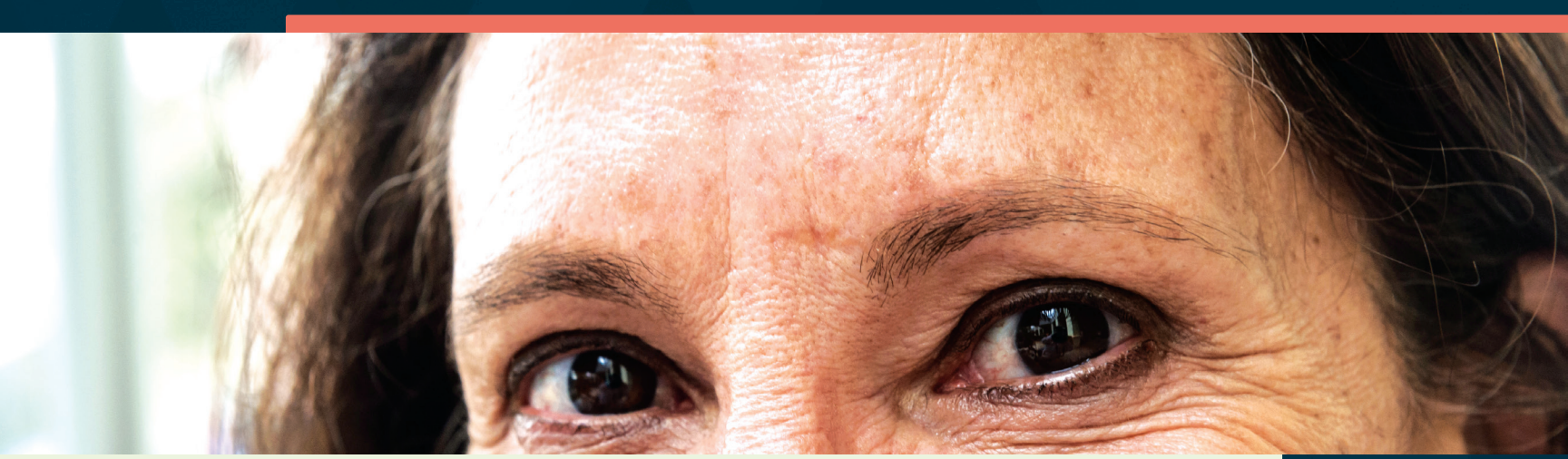




HOW OPTOMETRISTS ARE MEETING MEN AT THE CROSSROADS OF OCULAR HEALTH AND AESTHETICS



Here's how the two overlap—and what it means for men specifically.

BY M. SHANE SWATTS, OD

Walk into any modern aesthetics clinic, and you will notice a subtle shift: More men are showing up. In optometry, we've long focused on health and vision, but over the years, as the management of dry eye has evolved, the door to aesthetics has quietly opened—and male patients are stepping through. Technologies such as intense pulsed light (IPL) therapy and radiofrequency (RF) have been game-changers for managing meibomian gland dysfunction. Many doctors have begun to realize that these devices are also powerful aesthetic tools, especially for men, who aren't always vocal about wanting to look better. In fact, they often wait until the conversation is brought to them—usually during a dry eye consult or after a partner nudges them into the chair. But

once the subject is broached, the interest is real.

OPTOMETRY'S UNIQUE POSITION

Many optometrists began offering IPL or RF to treat patients with

chronic dry eye, ocular rosacea, and lid inflammation. These technologies have changed the way we manage the ocular surface, and our patients are grateful for the benefits. However, we often overlook how familiar we've

AT A GLANCE

- ▶ Over the past few years, as dry eye management has evolved, the door to aesthetics has quietly opened—and male patients are stepping through.
- ▶ There's still a lingering idea that these services are predominantly for women, but when we change the language and lead with health, the narrative starts to shift.
- ▶ When you frame it as a skin health protocol instead of a cosmetic protocol, men are more likely to follow through.

become with the skin and how much we already know about periocular tissue, inflammation, and aging. We've got the tools. We've got the patients. The crossover into ocular aesthetics should be seamless.

Let's say a patient with complaints of dry eye walks into your practice and you recommend IPL, noting that in addition to addressing the patient's dry eye symptoms, it can also reduce redness, broken capillaries, and sun damage on the face. Suddenly, you've opened a new line of conversation—one rooted in care, not cosmetics.

BRIDGING THE GAP

One of the barriers to male patients participating in aesthetic care is their perception of what these services entail. There's still a lingering notion that they are predominantly for women, but when we change the language and lead with a discussion about health, the narrative starts to shift. The following are some ways optometrists can connect with male patients to pique their interest in aesthetic services.

- **Use Outcome-Based Language.** Talk about skin health, reduced redness, improved texture, and clearer complexion.
- **Be Matter-of-Fact.** Men respond well to directness.
- **Offer Bundled Services.** Pair medical IPL with a facial pass or post-treatment skincare product.
- **Simplify Access.** Make it feel included, not extra.
- **Highlight Functionality.** Present these services as part of a healthy day-to-day wellness and maintenance routine.

We can't talk about skin health without addressing skin care. Most men are still washing their faces with the same soap they use on their body—if they're washing their face at all. Their skincare "routine" is often water, a bar of soap, and whatever moisturizer their partner bought, which represents a huge opportunity

ADDITIONAL READING





See my past article, "Your Comprehensive Guide to Ocular Aesthetics," from the May/June 2023 issue of *Modern Optometry*, which offers an overview of what it takes to offer this service in a practice so you have a bit of an idea before you actually dive in.

for us to educate without overwhelming. Recommending a simple, two- or three-step regimen, such as a gentle cleanser, antioxidant serum, and SPF, goes a long way. When you frame it as a skin health protocol instead of a cosmetic practice, men are more likely to follow through. Better yet, when they start seeing results, they're more likely to trust your recommendation on advanced procedures, too.

Offering a curated, minimal skincare line in your practice can remove the guesswork. Men appreciate simplicity. Keep the shelves clean and concise and the options focused and effective.

Also, consider how your environment looks and feels. If your aesthetic space is overly feminine or spa-like, some men may feel out of place. Neutral coloring, clean design, and intentional branding can help create an inviting, gender-inclusive environment. Every touchpoint, from check-in to checkout, should be aligned around comfort and credibility.

REAL-WORLD INTEGRATION

You don't have to reinvent your practice to start offering aesthetic services to your male patients. In fact, you probably already are—you just haven't framed it that way yet.

Start by identifying patients already receiving IPL therapy or RF. Do they have signs of rosacea, sun damage,

skin laxity, or post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation? If so, educate them on the full scope of benefits of further treatment. Take before-and-after photos and implement protocols that combine both medical and aesthetic outcomes.

When a male patient sees visible improvement in both his symptoms and appearance, he becomes not only compliant, but also curious. That curiosity often turns into conversations about maintenance and further improvement. That's your opportunity to get him on board.

LOOKING AHEAD

Men's participation in aesthetic care isn't a passing trend—it's a reflection of broader societal change. Health and appearance are no longer separate conversations.

As ODs, we're already talking about inflammation, aging, and cellular health. Integrating aesthetics into that care—especially for men—isn't a leap. It's the next logical step. ■

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