



A GUIDE TO DELIVERING PERSONALIZED PATIENT CARE



Reap the benefits of treating each patient as if they are your only patient.

BY MILA IOUSSIFOVA, OD, CNS, FAAO, FOWNS

In 2013, I founded my practice, South Waterfront Eye Care, with a clear goal in mind: to create a welcoming space where every patient feels they have an eye care team dedicated entirely to them. This mission steers each patient interaction, examination, and treatment.

Delivering personalized care hinges on the ability to understand each patient's unique needs from the moment of initial contact, which could involve them exploring our website, engaging with our live chat function for information, or directly contacting us via telephone or text message to schedule an appointment.

In this article, I offer some suggestions for providing the best possible personalized care to your patients. These pearls have served me well and may help you improve patient satisfaction and increase referrals.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

During the patient's initial interaction with our office, my staff employs a targeted set of questions to gain insights into their reason or reasons for seeking care. Whether they're experiencing a change in vision or other issues, such as symptoms of dry eye, these details help us tailor their appointment appropriately. Our virtual assistant facilitates

this process by emailing our patients an electronic medical history questionnaire, which includes specific inquiries about dry eye symptoms, SPEED score, and lifestyle factors.

Based on the patient's questionnaire responses, we annotate the appointment with pertinent information, taking note of concerns regarding dry eye, headaches, and binocular vision issues, which enables us to customize our pretesting procedures and exam accordingly.

Additionally, our daily morning office huddles serve as a forum to discuss each patient scheduled for the day, ensuring that our team is



Figure 1. Our optical was built with custom bamboo frame boards and displays.

fully prepared and informed about what to anticipate during the visit. This approach guarantees that every patient receives the personalized attention and care they deserve.

PROVIDE THOROUGH EXAMINATION AND SPECIALIZED TESTING

Beyond standard vision and health pretesting, it is important that each patient receives meibography scanning to assess for meibomian gland dysfunction (MGD), the primary cause of evaporative dry eye disease (DED).¹ We share these detailed images with patients during our educational sessions on dry eye to enhance their understanding and involvement in their care.

We also evaluate each patient's carotenoid levels to start conversations about nutrition and overall wellness. The patient is given a printout showing their carotenoid score, along with dietary recommendations to improve their antioxidant levels. Depending on their score, overall health, and/or family history of age-related macular degeneration, we may also recommend

supplements to prevent ocular diseases, such as age-related macular degeneration. For patients more interested in a comprehensive exploration of nutrition and gut health, we offer further nutrition counseling, including functional health testing, such as stool analysis, micronutrient blood tests, and hormone tests. For dry eye management, we also provide

in-office measurements of omega-3 index and vitamin D levels.

SIMPLIFY PATIENT-DOCTOR COMMUNICATION

The implementation of a virtual scribe during the examination enables our doctors to concentrate on communicating with the patient without the distraction of typing. The virtual scribe also ensures completion of patient education and post-exam summaries so that patients receive all the doctor's recommendations promptly at checkout.

To enhance convenience and compliance with our prescribed therapies, we maintain a stock of most products we recommend in-office for the management of dry eye and we keep our most prescribed daily contact lenses on hand, allowing us to provide them to patients immediately after their examination. This streamlined approach aims to optimize patient care and satisfaction throughout their entire experience with us. Furthermore, to guarantee seamless communication, patients can directly and easily reach us with any queries or concerns using an app that allows texts or calls using our landline number.

OFFER A RANGE OF TREATMENTS AND SERVICES

As a practice committed to addressing DED comprehensively,

“

TO IDENTIFY BOTTLENECKS IN YOUR OFFICE, WALK THROUGH THE PRACTICE AS A PATIENT OR SHADOW A NEW PATIENT SCHEDULED FOR A COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION OR CONSULTATION.

”



Figure 2. Treatment room where dry eye and aesthetic services are provided.

we provide a variety of advanced treatments tailored to each patient's specific needs. These include procedures such as intense-pulsed light therapy, radiofrequency (RF), LipiFlow Thermal Pulsation System (Johnson & Johnson Vision Care), Mibo Thermoflo (Mibo Medical Group), and TearCare System (Sight Sciences). A tailored approach for the individual patient is selected based on the presence of eyelid telangiectasia, the severity of obstructive MGD, and other factors. We also offer in-office blood draws for the preparation of autologous serum and platelet-rich plasma eye drops, further enhancing our personalized treatment protocols.

With the expertise of two skilled aestheticians on staff, patients undergoing intense-pulsed light therapy and RF treatments receive not only

specialized eye care, but also personalized skin assessments and recommendations for custom-prepared skin care. For those interested, we also offer aesthetic treatments, such as microneedling, RF microneedling, and Hydrafacial (Hydrafacial) treatments, tailored to the individual patient's preferences and needs. This comprehensive approach underscores our commitment to providing holistic care that addresses both ocular health and overall well-being.

Optical services represent another facet of our practice where personalized care truly shines (Figures 1 and 2). By curating an exclusive selection of independent frame lines, we can cater to patients seeking specific brands and styles. Using our electronic medical records system, we're able to generate reports

on sales of particular frame lines. This enables us to extend personalized invitations to patients for trunk shows, where they can explore the entire collection firsthand. Our commitment to personalized care extends beyond the office walls. When attending trade shows, we select special frames with individual patients in mind, based on our understanding of their preferences and needs.

Additionally, as early adopters of NeuroLens technology (NeuroLens) in Oregon, our patients have come to rely on our office for acquiring these specialized lenses, which are known to alleviate headaches, digital strain, and other symptoms associated with eye misalignment.

BUILD PATIENT TRUST AND LOYALTY

The ultimate testament to the success of your personalized care is when patients continue to seek your services, even after they relocate. It is truly gratifying to hear them express such sentiments as, "No one knows my eyes like you do, and I can't trust anyone else to take care of them." When I hear this, it reaffirms my dedication to providing exceptional care tailored to the individual patient and fostering long-lasting relationships built on trust and expertise.

My practice is intended to be a sanctuary where patients are seen as individuals with unique needs, concerns, and aspirations. ■

1. Sheppard JD, Nichols KK. Dry eye disease associated with meibomian gland dysfunction: focus on tear film characteristics and the therapeutic landscape. *Ophthalmol Ther*. 2023;12(3):1397-1418.

MILA IOUSSIFOVA, OD, CNS, FAAO, FOWNS

- Owner, South Waterfront Eye Care, Portland, Oregon
- dr.mila@swec.us; Instagram @eyedoctormila
- Financial disclosure: Speaker (Bausch + Lomb, BioTissue, Johnson & Johnson, Lumenis, Sight Sciences, Sun Pharma); Consultant (Johnson & Johnson, Lumenis)