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Managing the new wearer by Clair Bulpin and Theresa Cox

WHY TALK TO THE NEW CONTACT LENS WEARER

Embarking on the toughest part of the contact lens journey

Almost half of new wearers who drop out of contact lens wear do so in the first two months.¹ By providing the right level of support during this critical period we are more likely to convert our trial into a long-term, happy and loyal contact lens wearer.

Difficulty with Application and Removal

58%

Discomfort and Dryness

57%

Unhappiness with Visual Performance

44%

The top three reasons for new wearers dropping out of contact lens wear.*

*Perceptions of CL retention. Optician, 2013;246:6430 20-23.

Early intervention is KEY

With modern advances in materials, lens design and prescription availability the majority of reasons causing patients to dropout can be tackled if patients let us, the experts, know the problems they are experiencing. By setting realistic expectations that the first lens tried may not be perfect, and that they are aware of the myriad of options available, they are more likely to come back to discuss their issues rather than assuming contact lenses are not for them and dropping out despite having had the aspiration to try them in the first instance.

“Like shoes, no one contact lens suits all – the aim of the trial is to see how you adapt to lens wear – let us know of any niggles and we can tailor the lenses to your own personal requirements – finding the perfect lens type for you”

The 3 stages of the contact lens journey

Effective communication and support between the patient, practitioner and practice team at each stage ensures that we help build a successful contact lens practice.

The Teach

Having built rapport with your patient adapt your language and style to meet their needs – one approach will not work for all.

On Their Own

Supporting materials and apps can help new wearers in the early stages and encourage proficient lens handling.^{4,5}
Offer follow up phone calls to show your support.

First Review

Open questions to allow you to gauge success and the benefit of lens wear, and seek further improvements, if required.

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WHAT TO LOOK AND LISTEN FOR

Use visual clues to help gauge level of support needed

Lens Handling

Observation of patients' reactions to you approaching their eye, holding lids and applying the lens may give an indication of likely success of the handling session. Discuss such observations in handover from 'fitter' to 'teacher'.



Compliance

Patients' appearance, personal hygiene and hand cleanliness may tell you a great deal about their potential of following lens care instructions.

First review

Allow the patient to tell you the positive benefits wearing lenses has had for them before starting with an open 'tell me about your experience with the lenses' question. This allows you to remind them of the eventual outcome as you listen carefully for clues of any issues/niggles they have had with their lenses during the trial.

Allow the patient to demonstrate lens handling and care to ensure they are following correct procedures and haven't picked up any bad habits.

Watch out for the early signs of issues that may result in drop out if not tackled

- **Vision issues**

This could be poor vision at distance/near or fluctuating vision particularly for your astigmatic patients.

- **Discomfort/dryness issues**

Could be on insertion, towards end of the day or dependant on environmental factors.

- **Handling issues**

Patients may not be wearing lenses as often as they would like due to the time taken to apply them.

- **Annoyance of lens care procedures**

Cleaning procedures may be seen as a chore.

By picking up these issues early we can intervene and resolve them before patients give up and drop out. This may be by trying an alternative lens/design or altering the modality. Overall be positive and confident.

Risk-taking propensity is another factor in non-compliance among contact lens wearers, and young males are among the groups at greater risk of contact lens-related infection.²

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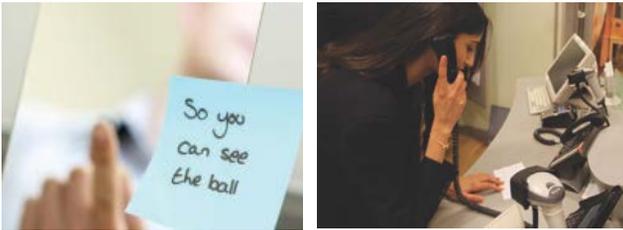
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WHAT TO SAY AND DO

Provide support and on-going motivation to your patient

Flag up that some patients find the early stages challenging so if they do, they are not on their own.

Discuss their motivation for wearing lenses – consider writing it on a sticky note on the bathroom mirror to serve as a reminder and motivator when times get tough.



Utilise your team

An approachable and well-trained team can make a huge difference in helping patients through the first month or so.

- Ensure all staff are familiar with early issues with handling, wear and care and when a further appointment may be necessary
- Ensure your team are positive advocates and able to encourage and empathise with your new wearers
- Consider the role of a contact lens buddy where support staff can make a follow up call to new wearers, provide reassurance and look out for the warning signs of potential dropout i.e. cancelled appointments, unreturned calls

Focus on lens handling - top tips

- Utilise staff who are wearers themselves – this personal perspective can really help build rapport
- Reassurance is key 'practice makes perfect'
- Use analogies like learning to ride a bike to emphasise that everyone learns at different speeds
- Establish trust to be able to cope with anger, frustration, low confidence or emotion in those feeling overwhelmed on a personal level
- Create a calm, relaxed atmosphere and allow time for the teach appointment
- Regularly observe teach sessions to ensure all aspects are being covered
- Lead by example with regards to hygiene – ensure your contact lens teach area is clean, free of clutter and everything you need is to hand
- Keep hygiene simple - deliver the 'dos and don'ts' in small chunks and provide written information to take away



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FURTHER READING

1 JJVC data on file. Retention Study 2014, UK, n=534

2 Carnt N, Keay L, Willcox M *et al*. Higher risk-taking propensity of contact lens wearers is associated with less compliance. *Contact Lens Ant Eye*, 2011;34:5 202-6.

3 Perceptions of CL retention. *Optician*, 2013;246:6430 20-23

4 Ewens E. How to support contact lens wearers for success. *Optician*, 2013;246:6431 32-35.

5 Sulley A, Osborn Lorenz K and Jubin P. Handling: the forgotten factor in soft contact lens success. *Optician*, 2013;246:6426 25-30.

Useful patient tools:

Consider introducing your patients to the [LENSPAL™ app](#) to help your patients get through their first 30 days of lens wear.

Useful reminders on lens wear and care are available on manufacturer's [websites](#) and [YouTube](#), including reassurance on how to remove contact lenses

To read the full published article [CLICK HERE](#).

Acknowledgement



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Both are Faculty members at THE VISION CARE INSTITUTE[®] of Johnson & Johnson Medical Limited.