The presbyopic soft contact lens modality of choice: Multifocals

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According to a 2008 Gallup poll, eight out of 10 contact lens wearers older than 50 are interested in multifocal contact lenses. Yet in 2012, only one-third of contact lens visits for patients older than 40 were for a multifocal lens. Is your practice missing out on this opportunity?

Early-generation multifocal contact lenses struggled to achieve high success rates due to antiquated designs and poor reproducibility in manufacturing. Today, we have numerous excellent multifocal contact lens designs (soft, soft toric, hybrid, small and large diameter gas permeables) manufactured with precision and reproducibility previously unattainable.

Recent studies suggest multifocal contact lenses are preferred by patients and offer unique advantages over monovision.

Multifocal contact lenses vs. monovision:
- Preferred by patients on average by 3:1
- Enhanced stereo acuity
- Improved range of near vision
- Improved intermediate and computer vision particularly in advanced presbyopia
- Little differences in contrast sensitivity
- Improved balance of vision between eyes
- Starting a multifocal fit early is preferred and successful

So why are some practitioners successful with multifocals, while others report little success? Successful multifocal contact lens fitters have embraced these advanced lens technologies and mastered the art of helping patients neurally adapt to these lenses. Multifocal fitters have a long-term plan for patients that doesn’t involve gradually increasing plus on the non-dominant eye. There will always be an occasional patient better suited for monovision, and that’s OK. However, in today’s up-close, technology-driven world, multifocals should be the first contact lens of choice.

References

Dr. Smiley is the owner of Vision Professionals, a two-location private practice in Columbus, Ohio. He was a recipient of the American Optometric Foundation Award of Excellence in Patient Contact Lens Care. He serves as a clinical investigator for Bausch + Lomb and Blanchard Contact Lens, Inc. Dr. Smiley is a clinical assistant professor of optometry at The Ohio State University College of Optometry.

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