

## Specialty Contact Lenses: Turn More Patients Into CL Wearers

David I. Geffen, OD, FAAO

### SYNOPSIS

*New and improved specialty contact lenses enable success with nearly any patient. Expand your contact lens patient base--and revenue stream.*

### ACTION POINTS

**COST OUT EXPENSES.** Tally expenses for inventory and fitting time with specialty lenses.

**SPREAD GOOD NEWS.** Explain to patients why they can wear contacts, after all.

**ACCESS VENDOR SUPPORT.** Seek help from specialty lens vendors on fitting & managing patients.



In photo: Dr. Geffen's office manager and optical supervisor in his office's contact lens area.

Patients with significant astigmatism, presbyopia or other issues requiring specialty lenses used to be a challenge for ODs to fit in contact lenses. In some cases, these patients still challenge us, but new specialty lenses, such as those produced by [Alden Optical](#), give us the opportunity to fit most of these patients in contacts. That is a win for the patient who never before could wear contact lenses, and a win for the OD who profits from the lifetime value of contact lens wearers (who return more consistently to the practice than non-contact lens wearers, in addition to purchasing eyewear).

Specialty contact lens patients are even more of a practice-building opportunity. I estimate the value of a conventional contact lens patient to be about \$5,000 over a 10-year lifetime, and a specialty lens patient to be worth about \$10,000 over the same time frame.

### COST OUT EXPENSES

Patients who have been told they cannot wear contact lenses will become your most loyal patients if you are able to show them that, actually, they can wear contacts after all. If you enable them to wear contacts comfortably long-term, they will be even more loyal, not only returning for examinations, but referring friends and family. They have a powerful success story to tell about your practice to their personal network. These types of patients are some of my most rewarding experiences in practice. These are people who are the most grateful for what you are doing for them. They become my most loyal patients and best referral sources. They do take somewhat more time, but you should be more than compensated for this time. The patient understands they have more complex problems than average, and, so, usually are willing to pay more.

### Reasonable Inventory Investment

We have purchased an Alden NovaKone fitting set and a toric set. Most of the astigmatic lenses are easy to fit empirically and a set is not necessary. The costs of the sets are nominal and the benefits far outweigh the expense.

### Complimentary Training for Doctor and Staff

Training for the toric and multifocal lenses is not necessary if you are fitting the conventional forms of these lenses. For the NovaKone there is a short training which will help you in understanding the benefits of this design. The training we received was complimentary from Alden.

### Charge What Your Time is Worth

Make sure you are charging a premium for these services. The patient knows their prescription is not in the average range and will expect to pay more. It involves more expertise and training on our part to make these people happy, and we should be adequately compensated.

### Fittings Not As Much of a Challenge

Usually we can fit the patient in one visit, but the visit takes slightly longer as I like to trial fit multiple lenses. With the Alden toric lenses I usually do not use trials as I have found

the empirical fit to be very precise and predictable. These lenses often take the same time as conventional torics. The Alden NovaKone design is slightly more complicated, but a great addition for the irregular cornea, the Alden Astera multifocal toric, is also easy to fit empirically. The follow-up is usually the same as conventional lenses, and we need one to two follow-up visits to get our final result.

### **SPREAD GOOD NEWS**

A key to successfully fitting specialty lens patients in contacts is explaining why they really can wear contacts. The role of doctor in this case is to clear up outdated information or misconceptions and reassure. Many patients come to us and say they were told by their previous doctor they couldn't wear contacts. We tell our patients that there are major strides in new technology and we are using state of the art contact lenses. We are willing to work with them to get them the best possible fit and it may take going through a few lenses to get there. We also tell them we will not charge them for the lenses if they don't work, just the time we spend with them. We have found that over 90 percent of our specialty lens patients are able to wear their lenses full time and are happy to be able to wear contacts.

### **ACCESS VENDOR SUPPORT**

The process of fitting patients in specialty lenses is made easier with a partner like Alden Optical, which provides us with consultants who are really there for us. For example, if I have a challenging astigmatic patient in my exam chair who I could use advice about fitting, my staff or I can call our designated Alden representative, and we instantly will be given the guidance that allows us to create a satisfying patient experience—and a long-term contact lens wearer. I often use the company's consultants. It is very nice to speak with an expert who can guide you through the fitting process or help you determine the next step if something is not expected. The service is readily available over the phone.

It is important when dealing with specialty lenses to work with a company with great exchange privileges, great return policies and lenses that are reproducible with great quality. Alden Optical offers all those advantages, which is why they are the specialty contact lens partner I prefer to work with.

### **Related ROB Articles**

[Multifocal CLs: Aging Population Makes This a Practice-BUILDER](#)

[Develop a Specialty in Multifocal Contact Lenses](#)

[Hand-Held Device Advice for Multifocal Contact Lens Patients](#)



David I. Geffen, OD, FAAO, is a partner of [Gordon-Weiss-Schanzlin Vision Institute](#) in La Jolla, Calif. To contact: [dig2020@aol.com](mailto:dig2020@aol.com)

Like [Bill Shelly](#) and 2 others like this.