

## ECP OF THE Month



**Dana Cohen**  
Pediatric Optician  
Medford Optical, Medford MA

### What lens materials do you generally dispense to children?

We always use polycarbonate or Trivex® materials to give the child the maximum protection against any possible impact. The safety of the child's vision is of extreme importance and should never be compromised under any circumstances.

### What issues do you face when fitting children?

One of the big issues is dealing with the distraught parents! When the young mom of a two year-old is told that her child needs glasses to correct a muscle imbalance, it can take several minutes to explain the visual needs of the child while trying to make the parents feel more relaxed about the situation. I will try to make the parents feel more confident that the eyeglasses will usually help the child focus better and will hopefully strengthen the eye muscles with the regular use of the glasses.

### How do you deal with brand conscious children/parents?

The tween market is mostly influenced by name brands. I've had a 13 year-old go directly to the Coach frames and tell their parents that is the one they want without even trying it on. I will encourage the teen to try the frame on for fit because I stress to them that "comfort is half the battle!" That usually works. Name brands often will make the teen feel "cool" in their new eyewear and consequently more confident about their appearance!

### How does the increase in Ophthalmologist dispensing affect your practice?

I would be fooling myself if I said that it had no effect because obviously if MD's were not dispensing, we would all be that much busier. In my case I have been promoting Medford Optical as a Pediatric Optical Shop for over 25 years. We now have the reputation as being the shop to refer to for the "tough cases." Our business is about 80% pediatric eyewear and 20% adults. It is not unusual for a family to travel an hour and a half to come to our store and upon

arrival the reaction is often "Wow, it was worth the ride!" This is because the first thing the parents see is a child friendly environment with a huge selection of pediatric frames. We stock over 600 children's frames from newborns to teens.

### What advice do you give parents to help them maintain their children's eyewear?

I use a very unique approach with the parents when dispensing their new eyewear. I am very honest with them right up front and will tell them that their child will scratch their lenses, and that it's usually not a big deal and nothing to worry about. I let them know that all children are rough on glasses and there will be the normal hairline scratches that accumulate and it does not affect their vision.

Only large abrasive scratches in the middle of the lenses are something to be concerned about and this will be taken care of once within a one year period under the warranty. I have found if the parents leave our store with the full expectation of eventually finding their kids glasses scratched, then they don't seem to panic about it so much. It is often as important to be a good psychologist as it is a great optician!

### How did you get your pediatric practice off the ground?

This venture did not happen overnight. It started early on in my career when I realized that no one in the business was paying any attention to the babies and toddlers and their need for prescription eyewear. I grew up always wanting to be a Pediatrician and when I ended up in the optical business (my Dad was an OD) as an optician I decided that it was time to pursue my dream. I began by investing in hundreds of kid's frames when most of my colleagues were stocking around ten frames maximum. I started to market my practice to all the local Pediatric Ophthalmologists in the state of MA and I developed a beautiful pediatric brochure and did a mass mailing to most of the area practices.

As word of mouth spread my customer base drastically changed from primarily adult to more and more kids. In 1981 I remodeled the store to focus on children's eyewear and had a huge mural painted on the wall that said, "We Love Kids." That has been my motto ever since. My ultimate goal of working with Pediatric MD's came to fruition last year when I was selected to open within the Department Of Pediatric Ophthalmology at Children's Hospital Boston at Waltham. I can now concentrate on providing the best eyewear possible for many of these newborns and toddlers who are in need of vision correction. ■

*Know any possible ECP of the Month candidates?  
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