

CORPORATE

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Optometry TODAY!

SEPTEMBER
2020

BEST PRACTICES FOR TODAY'S
CORPORATE EYECARE PROFESSIONAL



4 Q's With
the American
Association
of Corporate
Optometrists

How Camille
Cohen, O.D.,
Turned to
Tutoring

THE COVID CONUNDRUM

3 tips for bolstering mental health + an inside
look at the new viability of health hubs and
the corporate optical partners inside them

Contents+

COT! • SEPTEMBER 2020



08

Features

8

Health Care Hubs

In today's world, every advantage counts. To wit, corporate opticals are increasingly partnering with health hubs from CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart. Are you ready for the changing health care landscape?



04



11

76%

of ECPs will continue to use telemedicine as an option for patients in their practice moving forward, according to the *Eyecare Business + Optometric Management Trends in Vision Telemedicine* study.

Columns

- 04 Business Insider
- 06 **NEW!** The BIG Idea
- 11 The Backstory

CORPORATE Optometry TODAY!

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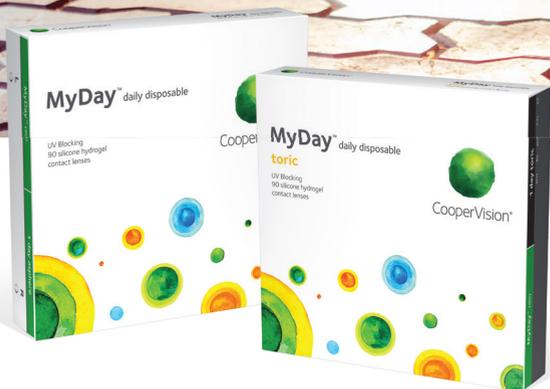


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FOCUS ON MENTAL HEALTH



Health care professionals in all fields experience **higher levels of stress** than the average person. Here, three tips for managing mental health.

IN A 2018 REPORT FROM

Medscape that surveyed more than 15,000 physicians across 29 specialties, 42% reported burnout. Additionally, 39% reported experiencing depression.

Add in a pandemic and the issues deepen—as does the list of practice concerns for corporate optometrists. What do the new patient care protocols look like? What are changes my retail partner is making? Am I doing enough?

The new normal is in constant flux, most of it out of ECPS' control, causing stress levels to be at an all-time high.

WHY MENTAL HEALTH?

According to psychotherapist Emily Riegel, LMHC, LPC, Covid-related stress is greatly affecting health care workers' mental health.

"It's been associated with increased need for days off from work, depression, sleeplessness, anxiety, substance abuse, compassion fatigue, and an increase in medical errors," says Riegel. "Now, more than ever, it is important for health care professionals to be intentional about managing their own mental health."

HEADSPACE FOR HEALTH CARE

HeadSpace, Calm, Breethe, and 10% Happier are some of Riegel's favorite mental health apps. HeadSpace is offering a year for free to health care workers, which includes several guided meditations addressing Covid-19. [headspace.com](https://www.headspace.com)

STRESS MANAGEMENT TIPS

There are simple ways health care pros can reduce stress in the workplace.

» Add Some Green.

According to Riegel, plants can have a calming effect on people. Many studies show that employees who have plants in their offices seem to worry less, feel better about their job responsibilities, and take fewer sick leave days. Other research suggests that nature can reduce overstimulation and boost cognitive performance.

» Take a Break + Breathe.

Taking stretch or exercise breaks throughout a workday can also help in stress reduction. Along with exercise, "one of the most important and easiest interven-

tions to reduce stress is diaphragmatic breathing or deep, slow breathing," says Riegel. Deep breathing stimulates the vagus nerve and lowers the stress response or "fight-or-flight" mechanism.

» Surround Yourself With Positivity.

Studies have also shown that people who experience more positive emotions have greater ability to quickly recover from stressful situations, have better problem-solving abilities, and have healthier immune systems. "Start by turning off the news in the waiting room and listen to uplifting podcasts more intentional about finding joy," Riegel recommends.

Although many great resources are available, these may not be enough. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

It is normal to feel overwhelmed during these unprecedented times. Prioritizing your mental health will benefit your patients, your practice, your loved ones and—most important—you. **COT!**

—Weslie Hamada, O.D., FAAO



WESLIE HAMADA, O.D., FAAO,

is an industry consultant and has held roles on the professional affairs NA team and R&D at Johnson & Johnson Vision and at Luxottica Eye Care as senior director of O.D. engagement.

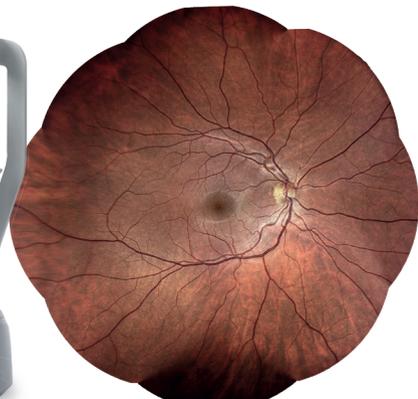
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The Power of Community

COT! checks in with American Association of Corporate Optometrists Executive Director & CEO **Tiffany A. Jackson** to learn about the resources the organization offers.



IN TODAY'S WORLD, EVERY RESOURCE—and every connection—counts more than ever. To learn more about the mission, goals, and opportunities offered by the American Association of Corporate Optometrists (AACO), *COT!* asked a few key questions to its executive director & CEO, Tiffany A. Jackson, CAE.



TIFFANY A. JACKSON

Jackson joined AACO in 2017—and the organization is a unique 501(c)(6) nonprofit trade association with just over 1,000 members.

Q. HOW IS AACO SUPPORTING CORPORATE OPTOMETRISTS DURING THIS UNIQUELY CHALLENGING TIME?

A. Although the mission and core values have always been the focus of AACO, it is more important than ever

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the American Association of Corporate Optometrists (AACO) is to provide technical and professional education, practice resources, and tools for corporate affiliated practitioners, so they may provide the highest quality care to their patients. The core values of AACO are Engagement, Inspiration, Education, and most importantly right now—Unity.

for the association to consider the best ways to continue to support and unify the corporate optometry community. Turning to the association's core values as a guide [see sidebar], the AACO has recently updated and added programs and information corporate optometrists will find helpful.

Q. PLEASE TELL US A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE UPCOMING CONFERENCE THIS FALL.

AACO MEMBERSHIP

The American Association of Corporate Optometrists is offering a **free** trial membership (for a limited time) to all corporate-affiliated optometrists who are new to AACO. Membership benefits include registration discounts, a subscription to the *AACO Corporate Optometrist* magazine, numerous equipment and product discounts, and even an opportunity for a free basic web landing page. *To join:* bit.ly/AACOMembership.

A. The AACO Annual Conference, originally planned to be held last May, has been moved to Nov. 12-14, 2020. The program features 13 COPE-approved CE hours. The conference is being held just outside Nashville, at the Gaylord Opryland Hotel.

Q. HOW IS AACO PREPARING TO KEEP THIS EVENT SAFE FOR ATTENDEES?

A. AACO is committed to safety and will take every possible precaution to provide a safe and interactive program. AACO meetings are a smaller event compared with other industry conferences, and that will allow for a very safe but "socially distant" learning opportunity. Optometrists who are currently unemployed due to the pandemic or other reasons may apply to attend the conference for free.

To learn more about the AACO Annual Conference: aacoeyes.org/2020-annual-conference.

Q. WHAT IS THE FUTURE GOAL FOR AACO?

A. We are living in a new world. In the aftermath of a global pandemic, old rules no longer apply. The new landscape we are living in requires great skill, resiliency, and day-to-day learning, all while having the vision to help optometrists shape a sustainable future for their practice and their patients. **COT!**

—As told to *Erinn Morgan*

“I need to increase safety and grow my practice while providing uncompromising care.”

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Health Care Hubs

BY MARIA SAMPALIS, O.D.

In today's world, every advantage counts. To wit, corporate opticals are increasingly partnering with health hubs from CVS, Walgreens, and Walmart. Are you ready for the changing health care landscape?

Is the future of health care focused on convenience and affordability for patients?

With this emphasis in mind, we have seen many corporate opticals of late partnering with health hubs—from Walmart and For Eyes at Walgreens to Rite Aid and CVS MinuteClinics. These health hubs provide collaborative care with other health care providers to deliver a better patient experience, compliance, and affordable health care.

What exactly does this mean for the future of optometry?

Great, innovative change will come in corporate optometry. This new model will allow O.D.s to practice full-scope optometry and be more embedded in a medical setting than ever before.

A career in corporate optometry could be even more fulfilling with the increased volume of patients, collaboration with other health care professionals, and practicing full scope with the latest technology.

WHAT ARE HEALTH HUBS?

Looking to the future, health hubs will provide the patient with access to multiple health care professionals—from the general practitioner to the optometrist—all under one roof.

One notable benefit to this type of collaborative care is that it may well provide better patient compliance and, ultimately, more positive patient outcomes.

Additionally, in today's world, the all-under-one-roof format of health care hubs might make patients feel more secure. Generally, these facilities are large with multiple entrances. Patients are able to enter through one door and exit another.

Check-in and checkout areas will be in different locations of the building to minimize patient exposure. Patients will not be in close contact with each other, and social distancing can be encouraged because the offices are generally large.

Providers within the facility



“A career in corporate optometry will be more fulfilling with the increased volume of patients, collaboration with other health care professionals, and practicing full scope with the latest technology.”



can work together to minimize multiple appointments for patients and have curbside or drive-thru pickup for multiple products.

Walgreens has debuted one example of this health care format.

“Walgreens has expanded health care services to include multiple specialties like immediate care services,



“Providing convenient health care will provide a critical role in optometry in this new medical model.”

diagnostic lab work, weight-loss management, and optical services at select locations,” says Janaki Patel, O.D., chief doctor of optometry at For Eyes at Walgreens.

Dr. Patel notes that building a health care corridor within Walgreens has been instrumental in improving quality of care and convenient access to health services.

“As a provider, it is rewarding to practice in a location where you can easily collaborate with other health care professionals in order to improve health outcomes for patients,” she says. “Having an on-site pharmacy that can instantly process electronic prescriptions to provide both prescription and over-the-counter products has greatly improved patient compliance and management of health conditions.”

Additionally, Dr. Patel notes that a full range of eyecare services are now

offered at For Eyes at Walgreens locations, including comprehensive eye exams and same-day urgent exams. And, electronic medical records and advanced instrumentation like a digital refraction system have elevated the patient experience.

“Partnering with For Eyes has provided access to additional resources that include a wide variety of popular designer frames, like Ray-Ban and Kate Spade, and the ability to process benefits for most vision plans,” she explains. “There are multiple synergistic benefits from both Walgreens and For Eyes in this hybrid model that have allowed us to better care for our patients.”

AFFORDABILITY IS KEY

Walmart has also expanded to health care hubs—and it prides its business model on having the most affordable health care.

According to the company, its new Dallas, GA, health hub offers a wide variety of medical services. “The Walmart Health Center in Dallas, Georgia, is working with partners to provide key services such as primary care, labs, X-ray and EKG, counseling, dental, optical, hearing, and community health education, all at low, transparent pricing, regardless of customers’ insurance status,” according to Walmart.

For example, diabetics will have access to their primary care physician, pharmacist, dentist, and eyecare professional under one roof—and, thus, better access to care. Offering convenient and affordable health care will provide a critical role in optometry in this new medical model.

According to Walmart, the health hub also features wellness resources: “The Walmart Health Center includes specialized community health resources, online education, and in-center workshops to educate the Dallas community about preventive health and wellness.”

ACCESSIBILITY IS ESSENTIAL

Another player in the health hub arena, CVS Health, reports that it is looking to expand to 1,500 health hub locations in 2021.

The company states: “With personalized pharmacy support programs and expanded MinuteClinic services, HealthHUB teams are improving care for patients managing chronic conditions, with a focus on recommending next-best clinical actions and driving medical costs savings. The HealthHUB store format also includes a variety of pathways to nutritional health with one-on-one and group counseling delivered by an in-store dietitian, as well as access to weight loss programs.”

Families are able to have wellness visits under this model—and routine wellness visits will help prevent future illnesses and be proactive in diagnosing and treating illnesses that run in the family.

THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

The health hub goal in sight is that collaborative and affordable health care will create a better patient experience. Better patient experiences will increase patient retention and patient outcomes.

With increased competition in the industry, patient experience is vital to be able to compete with others—convenient hours for medical visits and shorter wait times for emergency care. In today’s world, every advantage counts. COT!



MARIA SAMPALIS, O.D.,

is the founder of the Corporate Optometry group on Facebook and corporateoptometry.com. Currently, she is owner of Sampalis Eye Care in Cranston, RI, and has a sublease at For Eyes in Rhode Island.

FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE WITH Camille Cohen, O.D.



Camille Cohen, O.D.

Camille Cohen, O.D., has learned how to manage change.

Entering optical as an ophthalmic tech, she loved medical pathology, and enrolled in the Pennsylvania College of Optometry. She graduated in 2014, and just moved this year from private practice to corporate and employment to ownership.

“When the previous owner, for whom I had worked as a fill-in, offered me the Pearle Vision practice,” recalls Dr. Cohen, “I initially said no because I figured you needed 20 years of experience to do that. My brother told me he’d become my business partner, and that made the difference.”

She opened her Brooklyn, NY, Pearle Vision franchise on March 2. She was in business for just two weeks before closing because of the pandemic.

Fast-forward to July, and she says, “We’re back open five days a week, five hours a day, with some staff still furloughed.”

Here, Dr. Cohen discusses her journey in the industry and her tutoring initiatives helping optometry students thrive during these challenging times.

► **Interested in volunteering or assisting?**

Contact Dr. Cohen at drcamillecohenoptometry@gmail.com or the NOA at mainoffice@natoptassoc.org.

1 TRAINING → TUTORING

“I spent some time during closure training staff to make it more of a private practice inside a commercial one. I also reached out to help second- and third-year optometry students with a twist on traditional tutoring...[to] help with test anxiety.”

2 IN THE BEGINNING...

“It started a couple of years ago. I was the National Optometric Association’s communications officer and posted that I had an issue with taking tests. I got a flood of emails and calls, so we sent out a survey and the big issue that came back was test-related anxiety. I was in the process of talking to people about this when Covid hit.”

3 THE EXECUTION

“I was at home. Students were at home and devastated that exams and graduation were postponed. I reached out to other doctors to work with me to come up with mini-review Zoom sessions. I also asked a psychologist friend to do a video on test anxiety and ways to overcome it, and a high school friend and counselor to do sessions on recognizing anxiety [and] relaxation techniques.”

4 OUR INVITATION

“I sent invites to students who’d previously contacted me. We focused primarily on things like: ‘How are you studying?’ I explained that it’s not just what you need to know, but why. I told them that’s what it’s like in practice...it’s about putting it all together.”

5 WHAT’S NEXT

“Besides doing this on my own, I’m working with the NOA in a new position, NOA committee tutoring chair. I wish the schools would provide similar resources.

“It’s pretty basic,” says Dr. Cohen. “As I tell the students, ‘It’s all about getting into your own head.’” **COT!**

—Stephanie K. De Long

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