



NEW YORK STATE  
SOCIETY OF OPTICIANS, Inc.

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## New York State Continuing Education Mail-In Course

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### *Become a Sunwear Salesperson Expert!*

*By Debra R. White, MSED, ABOM, FCLSA*

I love wearing sunwear, and have several pairs which I select from depending on what I plan doing outdoors. I'm sure you do too. But, what about your patients? Do they own several pairs? Are you doing a really good job when it comes to presenting and selling sunwear to them? Try some or all of my ten proven strategies for selling sunwear and watch your multiple pair sunwear sales climb.

#### **Wear Sunwear Yourself**

There are two very important reasons for wearing sunwear yourself. First, you want to be seen wearing sunwear as you make your way around your community. You are an eyecare professional (ECP) and everyone who knows you expects you to wear the latest eyewear as well as what is essential for outdoor use. The worst thing you can do is wear clear glasses or no eyeglasses at all outdoors. This tells people that sunwear is not really important.

The second reason has to do with experience. To really understand the features and benefits a particular type of sunwear has, you need to wear it. After all, you are a trusted

ECP and your patients value your advice. What could be better than speaking about the virtues of sunwear from personal experience?

To be authoritative about sunwear, you need to trial as many options as you can so that you understand and appreciate all the recommendations you make. This will probably necessitate that you having several pair of sunwear. One pair might have dark grey lenses while another has a mirror coating and a third might have a photochromic pair. All of them might also have anti-reflective coating on them.

The important thing here is not the specific examples I'm providing but the concept – create sunwear of all kinds and trial it to discover what really works. As you do, you will discover the key points to share with your patients about the merits of those products. Because of your personal experiences, you will be able to say without reservation that you personally recommend XYZ sunwear because

*This course is worth one (1)  
New York State Dual Ophthalmic  
Dispensing/Business Management --  
Basic Level*

you have a pair and you love them. That's pretty powerful ammunition at the dispensing table.

Explain the Medical Necessity and Benefits of Sunwear Sunwear does more than just look great outdoors; it actually has a medically protective aspect to it. The majority of ultra-violet (UV) exposure to the eye occurs before age 18. This means that young people are particularly susceptible to it but all people need protection from it. Long-term exposure and accumulation of UV radiations to the eye have damaging effects on the conjunctiva (as a pinguecula), the cornea (as a pterygium), the crystalline lens (as a cataract), and retina (as macular degeneration). Recent studies indicate that blue light wavelengths can be hazardous in a similar way as UV radiations.

If you want to provide the best service for your patients, you need to explain the medical necessity of sunwear to them as well as the solutions for solving the problem. Emphasize that most parents slather sunscreen all over their kids when they go outdoors to play, yet many are unaware how harmful UV can be to the eye and its components. Explain how UV's effects build up over the years so the best course of action is to get protected early. Explain to parents that their children are particularly at risk because of the heavier absorption in their early years so getting UV protection at a young age makes medically good sense.

The easiest way to manage UV exposure is to supply lenses that absorb it. Fortunately, just about every plastic lens material on the market absorbs UV including polycarbonate, Trivex and high index lenses. While CR-39 only absorbs about half of the UV spectrum, you can add a UV dye or coating which will absorb the rest of it. Glass lenses have little UV absorption so if you use them, you'll need to add a UV-absorbing coating to obtain UV protection.

## **Offer Sunwear to Every Patient**

Just about everyone goes out in the sun at some point in their day. Some spend much more time outdoors than other. No matter what their lifestyle may be, when they venture out into the sun, their clear lenses just do not provide the glare protection they need. When you think about it, it becomes obvious that every patient needs sunwear.

In order to ensure that every patient gets sunwear, you need to offer it to every one. Think of it as their other first pair of eyeglasses – they have one clear pair for indoors and one tinted pair for outdoors. In most cases, the patient will need more than one pair of outdoor eyewear.

Even if a patient emerges from the exam room without a prescription, be sure to recommend sunwear. Remember, sunwear is for EVERYONE, not just those that receive a prescription. Letting emmetropic patients out of the office without recommending sunwear is not good ophthalmic practice ... and it's not good business either. Don't forget your contact lens patients, and those who may have had refractive surgery. While these patients have chosen to eliminate their everyday eyewear, they still need sunwear.

## **Bundle Sunwear with Clear Pairs**

Bundling is a great way to get your patients to buy sunwear. After selling the clear pair, have them try on a few sunwear styles. Offer them a discount on the sun pair if they purchase them with the clear pair. You might also offer them a slightly lesser discount if they buy them within a certain time frame – say within 30 days.

Bundling is an effective strategy used by most mass retailers. You encounter it every time you ask for the #4 meal at McDonalds or Taco Bell for example. If it works for them, it will work for you. Consider creating a number of bundled packages. The best one has all the whistles while the middle and basic versions have lesser options. All the buyer has to say it, "Give me #3", and the deal is done.

Bundling works because it offers more features for less money to the buyer. In many cases, they will buy more features than they originally intended because the deal they are getting is so good and they don't want to pass up the value of the bundled package.

It also works because it makes the buying decision less confusing. The buyer simply has to select the bundled package they want and ask for it rather than asking for one feature, then another, then another, then another, and so on. Convenience and simplicity are important elements in selling any kind of eyewear, especially sunwear where there are more options to discuss than with clear eyewear.

## **Sell Recognizable Brands**

Recommending branded eyewear products is one of the strongest tools an ECP has in selling sunwear these days.

That is because branding is powerful.

Branding is a label that identifies the quality and lifestyle that can be expected for a given product. Consumers who identify with that brand are often strongly loyal to it. It's as if the product had an unwritten guarantee promising consistent quality that buyers have come to expect. Eyewear manufacturers know the power of branding and align their designs with the brand's image.

People buy brands they feel portray who they are (or want to be). They feel comfortable wearing their brand and enjoy the feelings they experience when they use it. They also know that people who notice them in their branded products immediately conjure up a certain image of that person.

## **Demo Your Stuff**

Many people can only remember a small percent of what is told to them. Educationally, people have different learning styles: visual, tactile and auditory. Some learn best by hearing about the issue (auditory); some learn best by seeing a diagram or video about it (visual); and some learn best by touching, feeling or otherwise experiencing the product (tactile). If you are a smart ECP, you will use all three methods to get product information across to your patients.

Demonstrations hit all three of the learning styles. That is because demonstrations use a product sample to illustrate a point so patients get to touch and examine the product. They get to see it so their visual learning sense is satisfied, and your explanation facilitates auditory learning. It is for these reasons that a product demonstration is one of the most powerful communications tools you have. Use as many of them as you can.

I suggest that you have printed material in your office that explains your products too. People will pick up these pieces and read them while they are waiting. They make handy references to points you've made and play right into the learners who love reading about things. Posters and table-top advertisement pieces are essential to have around your dispensary because they provide and cement ideas visually. And of course, a product demo with a sample product is invaluable.

## **Keep Aware Of Fashion Trends**

Few people want to be seen in outdated styles. Fashion changes, so do products and the buying attitudes of consumers. This is particularly true of sunwear which has a significant link to the accessories market.

Even if you might not be the most fashionable person on earth, you can keep abreast of the latest fashion trends. One good method is to get a subscription to a fashion magazine and read it each month. Keep you eye on the styles being shown on television. Manufacturers spend millions on letting consumers know what their latest of-

ferings are through television. Contemporary movies also are diligent in using the latest fashion trends. In fact, they often help establish fashion trends so be sure to key into this.

Frame reps will be happy to show you their latest collections and explain the latest fads and trends. Seek out the advice of these people – in most cases, they know what they're talking about and can be very helpful.

Visiting optical trade shows will keep you right up there with all of the optical fashion divas, especially if you attend a large national or international conference. This is where manufacturers pull out all the stops to show ECPs what the latest fashions are. And of course, read optical magazines every month. The writers will help you learn what's hot and the ads will tell you what's new.

Part of keeping up with fashion trends is keeping an eye on what celebrities are wearing. This crowd loves to sport sunwear so keeping an eye on who is wearing what among the beautiful people is smart. Sunwear worn by celebrities in movies, on TV and around town provides you an opportunity for some mighty powerful sound bits. For example, you might say to a potential buyer, "Did you know that the actor Will Smith wears these sunglasses?" Think of how powerful a statement like that is. How about some like, "Incidentally, these XYZ sunglasses were worn by Clint Eastwood at the Academy Awards."

Use posters of celebs wearing sunwear in your office too. Whether it's a famous race car driver wearing his favorite sunwear, a basketball player, actress or actor – who wouldn't want to look like that handsome guy or gorgeous woman? Your patient's will notice and want to wear what they are wearing too.

### **Make Sunwear Task Specific**

Some patients and ECPs are under the impression that one pair of sunwear will be fine for all outdoor activities. The truth is that sunwear, just like clear eyeglasses, can be made for specific tasks. When they are, they enhance the wearer's vision for that activity and deliver the maximum in visual comfort and performance. This is why you need to become a detective of sorts and find out how your patient uses their eyes outdoors.

If they golf, offer them high contrast amber or green sun lenses that enhance perception on the fairways. Boaters and other water enthusiasts should be offered mirror coated polarized sun lenses to cut glare and reduce the intensity of the sun. Cyclists will love red-colored photochromic lenses that increase contrast and adjust to varying light conditions. If your patient drives a great deal, polarized photochromic sun lenses are now available that adjust to varying light conditions behind the windshield. Patients who find themselves in full sun, high glare conditions, such as mountain climbers, will wonder how they ever managed without dark brown or gray lenses with

polarization. Skiers encountering bright sun overhead and reflections from the snow below will welcome double gradient mirrors for eliminating unwanted glare from above and below. How about a gradient blue mirror treatment for the hiker? The mirror treatment on top of the lens eliminates glare from above while the reduction of mirror in the bottom enables viewing the trail. Those finding themselves in rainy conditions such as sports spectators, runners or park rangers, will enjoy increased contrast with yellow or orange colored lenses.

It's not just the lenses that make sunwear task specific. Sunwear frames for active types should have design features to keep the frame comfortably on the head. These include features such as comfortable, grip-able nose pads and temple ends, and rugged frame materials. Active people want sunwear that protects against dust, dirt and grit. Fog resistance is also a helpful feature. Sunwear that wraps around the face provides full coverage and venting is the perfect solution for fogging.

### **Recommend Multifocal Sunwear for Presbyopes**

There's nothing more frustrating for a presbyope who needs to read something (like a map) with distance-only sunwear on. Piggybacking readers over sunwear not only looks dorky, it pretty much assures that one pair will scratch the other as they slide around. Ready-made sunwear readers are a good place to begin. There are even ready-made sunwear bifocals available. These are ideal for those who have little or no need for a distance prescription and they can be an easy sale if explained to the patient.

Multifocal prescription sunwear should be an easy sell as well. Segmented bifocals are simple to fit, and come at a good price point. PAL lenses are more cosmetic and patients who already wear them will understand their convenience and good looks as sunwear. When showing frames for multifocal sun lenses, be sure to keep in mind sufficient depth in the vertical dimension to allow adequate depth for the multifocal.

### **Sunwear First!**

Some successful sunwear sellers begin the eyewear selection process by asking the patient if they would like to begin with their clear pair or their sunwear pair. Or bolder yet, some recommend the sunwear first, because they know they'll be on-board for the clear pair later on.

Some ECPs call sunwear "the other first pair". That's a great concept which you should adopt. While your patient is trying on clear eyewear, place several sunwear pieces in their hands to try on too. It's a real conversation starter.

Selling sunwear can be a lot of fun! Take some of these proven sunwear selling strategies and run with them. Not only will they be fun to do, you'll see your profit potential escalate in a matter of weeks!

# New York State CEC Mail-In Course

#15-12

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## Become a Sunwear Salesperson Expert!

Circle the best answer for each question (or write in the correct answer) and return to:  
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1. Which sales technique assists the patient who is a tactile learner?
  - a. pamphlets on a table
  - b. playing an educational video
  - c. discussing features and benefits
  - d. showing an interactive lens demo unit
2. Your patient engaging in which activity has the most to gain from 8 Base sunlenses?
  - a. Nascar enthusiast
  - b. cyclist
  - c. UPS delivery
  - d. gardener
3. Which term is the reason eyewear manufacturers align themselves with highly recognizable names, found in designer clothing lines and sporting items?
  - a. Bonus
  - b. Bundling
  - c. Discount
  - d. Branding
4. Which patient will love photochromic lenses that not only darken with exposure to UV light, but visible light as well?
  - a. taxi driver
  - b. house painter
  - c. telephone lineman
  - d. store clerk
5. Which corneal growth is exacerbated by excessive UV, and may cause visual impairment if it is allowed to cross over the pupil?
  - a. Pinguecula
  - b. Pterygium
  - c. cataract
  - d. glaucoma
6. Which lens material requires additional treatment to make it UV protective?
  - a. CR-39
  - b. Trivex
  - c. polycarbonate
  - d. 1.6 plastic
7. Which group of patients benefits from sunwear the most?
  - a. contact lens wearers
  - b. kids
  - c. emmetropes
  - d. refractive surgery patients
8. This sales technique begins with basic packages and progressively adds more lens treatment options at attractive prices?
  - a. Bonus
  - b. Bundling
  - c. Discount
  - d. Branding
9. Which patient will love wearing their new orange-colored lenses?
  - a. store clerk
  - b. racecar driver
  - c. farmer
  - d. life guard
10. In addition to UV wavelengths, which color wavelength is now known to cause damage to the eye?
  - A. blue
  - B. red
  - C. green
  - D. yellow
11. Which sales technique will assist you in selling fashion sunwear to the patient always wearing the latest style of clothing?
  - a. Describing the technical benefits of polarization
  - B. Stating which actress was wearing a particular pair of sunglasses
  - C. Explaining the medical benefits of sunlenses
  - D. Demo-ing your new photochromic lens display
12. The increase in risk of which ocular condition may occur when excessive UV hits the retina?
  - a. cataract
  - b. macular degeneration
  - c. glaucoma
  - d. Pterygium
13. Your professional fishing guide would benefit the most from which sunlens recommendation?
  - a. photochromic
  - b. dark gray absorptive lens
  - c. gradient brown tinted lens
  - d. mirror coated polarized
14. As a trusted ECP, what is the worst thing you can do when it comes to selling sunwear?
  - a. recommending sunwear to all age groups
  - b. not wearing sunwear yourself
  - c. not being a fashion diva
  - d. selling more than one pair of sunglasses to active patients
15. ECP's should recommend sunwear to who?
  - a. only people who work outdoors
  - b. children only
  - c. everybody
  - d. just outdoor enthusiasts