Astigmatic Contact Lenses – A Huge Unmet Need

New Study Shows Vision is #1 to Patients

You can be your patient's hero when they are in need of a new or updated vision prescription. But are all the options that might improve patient satisfaction – including, possibly, specialty contact lenses – receiving adequate consideration?

A recent publication evaluated a database of 11,624 spectacle prescriptions to calculate the prevalence of astigmatism of varying degrees and found that the prevalence of patients with astigmatism of 0.75 and 1.00 D or greater in at least one eye was 47.4% and 31.8%.[1] This represents a wealth of patients who may be coming to you for toric contact lenses. Yet, about four out of 10 astigmats who have never worn contacts have not tried them because of information from family, friends or something they read that said people with astigmatism could not wear lenses. Even more amazing is that three out of 10 have not tried them due to advice from their doctors.[2]

Add this to the fact that globally, 43% of spectacle-wearing and 38% of contact lens-wearing patients with astigmatism reported less-than-complete satisfaction with the spectacles or contact lenses they wear most often, as judged by a score of 7 or less on a scale of 1 (very dissatisfied) to 10 (very satisfied).[3] Such findings point to unmet needs that could, in the case of astigmatic spectacle wearers, potentially be addressed by consideration of properly fitted toric contact lenses. The dissatisfaction among astigmatic contact lens wearers could similarly reflect a need for more appropriately selected and fitted lenses.

What are eye care professionals looking for in a toric lens to satisfy their astigmatic patients? In a study identifying the most important product attributes for eye care professionals when recommending soft toric contact lenses, the top 3 toric lens benefits related to vision, with the attribute of highest relative importance being "delivers crisp, sharp vision all day."[4] Likewise, when patients with astigmatism were asked about the top product attributes when selecting contact lenses, the top 5 toric lens attributes were visual benefits, with the benefit of highest relative importance being "delivers consistently clear vision at all times."[5]

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JOE'S VIEW
with Joe Barr, OD, MS, FAAO
Bausch + Lomb

The opportunity to fit and satisfy astigmatic patients is well within our reach; however there is a genuine need and opportunity for practitioners to proactively recommend and prescribe a more satisfying solution for their astigmatic patients. The good news is that eye care professionals and patients agree that when it comes to selecting toric soft lenses, the importance of visual benefits rises to the top.

Joe Barr

Joe Barr, OD, MS, FAAO
Vice President
Global Clinical & Medical Affairs
and Professional Services
Vision Care
Bausch + Lomb

[1]Young G, Sulley A, Hunt C. Prevalence of astigmatism in relation to soft contact lens fitting. *Eye & Contact Lens*. 2011 Jan;37(1):20-5.
[2]Astigmatism: Incidence & Barriers. U.S. Market Research Report. *Decision Analyst*. December 2008.
[3]Needs, Symptoms, Incidence, Global eye Health Trends (NSIGHT) Study. Market Probe Europe. December 2009.
[4]ECP Toric Needs Study: US. Millward Brown. December 2010.
[5]Consumer Toric Needs Study: US. Millward Brown. December 2010.

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