

My Experience With the Advantage HOYA Program

Business systems to help a clinical practice run smoothly and maximize its earnings.

BY JON-MARC WESTON, MD

I operate a joint ocular clinic and ambulatory surgery center. Having our own ambulatory surgery center adjacent to our clinic allows us to offer our patients a wide range of high-quality clinical services. This arrangement allows me to control the staffing, the quality of the surgical materials and equipment, and the overall patient experience in both areas. To help keep these entities operating smoothly, I subscribe to Advantage HOYA, a membership-based program that offers meaningful, nondisruptive business solutions such as benchmarking analysis, optical dispensary services, and now hearing loss services that enable my practice to provide patients a full range of offerings and continue to maintain effective patient flow.

PRACTICE BENCHMARKING

My Advantage HOYA membership began with a customized Practice Benchmarking Analysis that provided an in-depth report detailing important business parameters and characteristics of my practice. The analysis gave my administrators and me invaluable information that helped us make informed decisions in our practice. Brand awareness of Weston Eye Care is vital to our success in Roseburg, Oregon. This report gave us the full demographic and psychographic

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profile of our patient base, which will provide the right information so that our marketing efforts will resonate with our patient population. Another element of the report that we found helpful was the review of our insurance billing protocols compared with the regional and national average. We were able to identify areas of improvement that will save time, resources, and money.

ADDITIONAL PROFIT CENTERS

An exciting new program that came to our attention through Advantage HOYA is the unique approach to offering combined vision and hearing services through



Figure 1. Advantage HOYA helped Dr. Weston build a Web site to promote his EyeCanHear hearing services.

Dual Sensory Optimization. These services are facilitated via EyeCanHear, a unique approach to integrating hearing screening into an ophthalmic practice. The Dual Sensory Optimization approach has been very well received by our patients and has allowed us to grow our practice from within our current patient base. My staff and I wanted to be able to provide our patients with hearing services, because hearing and vision are the two most important senses for communication. Cataract patients are subject to hearing loss as well as vision loss, and no other specialists provide hearing examinations as a primary care function. Ear, nose, and throat (ENT) doctors see patients by referral and identify problems. These days, there are very few ENT doctors who check both senses. In our practice, patients come for their eye examinations without hearing aids; either they do not use hearing aids, or they simply forget to wear them. Subsequently, many of these patients have difficulty hearing our staff during their eye examinations, and it became clear to us that hearing is a natural extension of vision and the total patient examination. In our practice, we have now integrated the Dual Sensory Optimization approach into our patient process.

Although there are a variety of ways to incorporate hearing health services into an ophthalmic practice, EyeCanHear has allowed my staff and me to integrate these services in a manner that meets the vision and hearing needs of our patients. I recommend that any ophthalmologist who is considering adding hearing services to his or her practice hire an experienced organization that already has effective systems in place to manage the entire patient process: identifying, screening, examining, and scheduling patients. Hiring

an organization like EyeCanHear has saved my staff and me from having to establish this service on our own, and we have had a very positive response from patients.

If executed properly, nondisruptive adjunct services can become new profit centers for a practice, augmenting its existing services very effectively. A well-run profit center provides additional cash flow that can help make up for reduced reimbursements from areas such as cataract and refractive surgery, with the anticipated fee reductions associated with the Sustainable Growth Rate. Adjunct services also support a clinic's overall efforts, such as staffing requirements, overhead, and investment in new equipment. In our experience, meaningful adjunct profit centers can produce additional revenues for the maintenance, improvements, and the quality of the clinic's offerings for patients.

MARKETING

We employ both internal and external marketing services for our practice. The effectiveness of internal marketing is greatly influenced by the quality of a clinic's staff and facility. Patients who do not have a good experience in a clinic typically do not return to the practice for follow-up or routine visits. In some cases, they will complain about the experience to family and friends, hurting the growth of the practice. Developing focused internal marketing initiatives is the top priority in our practice. Patient word-of-mouth referrals are the best form of practice development, and any investment in external marketing will be negated by a patient's poor experience from within the practice.

Although our current volume of patients seeking hearing services is currently derived from internal marketing, screenings, and patient referrals, we have the capacity to offer these services to a larger number of patients. Therefore, we have recently begun engaging several types of external marketing initiatives. One example is a monthly movie night for adults 50 and over. Before the movie begins, the audience views our 30-second advertisement explaining our new service offerings and features in our practice, such as Dual Sensory Optimization. We also use traditional forms of external marketing such as print and television marketing, a Web site (Figure 1), patient newsletters for our patient base, and direct mail newsletters to potential patients. ●

Jon-Marc Weston, MD, is the founder and medical director of Weston Eye Center in Roseburg, Oregon. He acknowledged no financial interest in the company or products described herein. Dr. Weston may be reached at (541) 672-2020; drw@westoneyecenter.com.