

BRING IN

BUSINESS



Strategies to boost refractive surgery volume.



BY VICTOR DERHARTUNIAN, MD

Refractive surgeons around the world saw their bottom lines take a nosedive between 2008 and 2009 when LASIK volume plummeted. Conditions have improved since then, but promoting a refractive surgery practice requires hard work and strategies that optimize in-house efforts and public perception.

IN-HOUSE EFFORTS

One approach to succeeding in this area is to use what I term the “ARREARS strategy.”

A **Authenticity.** Transparency and clarity are key factors for your practice’s success. During a consultation, do not sugarcoat the information you provide. Be as clear as possible about the diagnosis, treatment options, expected outcomes, potential risks, and fees. Patients are much more willing to return for surgery when they trust their caregivers.

R **Research.** Stay up to date on the latest research and technological advances. Take part in forums where you can learn more about groundbreaking techniques in refractive surgery, corneal surgery, and ocular surface disease management. When communicating with colleagues in

these forums, avoid overrating your own abilities and undermining their advice. You can learn valuable pearls for improving your techniques, offerings, and efficiency.

R **Renew.** “Out with the old, and in with the new,” as the saying goes. Gone are the days of advertising through newsletters, billboards, and posters. Make sure your practice’s marketing techniques are up to date, and build your online presence.

E **Engagement.** As reported in *Forbes* in 2017, 62% of millennials said that if a brand engages with them on social media, they are more likely to become a loyal customer.¹ Analyze your practice’s patient demographics and interact with your patient population in ways that encourage loyalty.

A **Affordability.** The fees for your services can strengthen or weaken your practice. Generally speaking, yours is not the only ophthalmologic practice in the area. Evaluate your local market and ensure that your rates are competitive.

R **Review.** If you have not already, institute processes for regular internal evaluations of surgical

outcomes, patient satisfaction, customer service, and more. In addition, create systems for soliciting and monitoring patient reviews. Positive feedback reinforces a job well done. Negative reviews can provide insights into areas for improvement, and they offer an opportunity to reengage a dissatisfied patient.

S **Smile.** A positive attitude can have a dramatic impact, and a welcoming staff makes the patient experience more pleasant. Seeing smiling nurses and doctors after successful eye surgery boosts patient confidence and satisfaction.

ARREARS

- ▶ A = Authenticity
- ▶ R = Research
- ▶ R = Renew
- ▶ E = Engagement
- ▶ A = Affordability
- ▶ R = Review
- ▶ S = Smile

PUBLIC PERCEPTION

Although existing patients can spread positive word-of-mouth messages, attracting new business also depends on positive public perception. This is where what I call the “ACE strategy” comes into play.

A **Advertisement.** As noted above, it is important to showcase your practice, its providers, and its offerings in ways that appeal to your target audience. In addition to an effective, navigable website, your practice should have a strong presence on social media. For example, you could use Facebook and Instagram to share the *before* and *after* photographs of patients and their treatments, but only with their consent. On Twitter and Facebook, use hashtags to boost awareness of the products and services you offer. Share relevant research results on your Twitter feed and your Facebook page. Use LinkedIn to connect with

experts in your field and to share your views and news. Post surgical videos (again, with patients’ consent) to your Facebook page and on Eytube.net and Youtube. You can also live-tweet refractive surgery.

C **Charity.** Giving back can bring in business. Increase public awareness of your practice by participating in community screenings and other events. Offer free medical checkups to existing patients and use their visits as opportunities to update them on your practice’s other services.

E **E-traffic.** Analyze the traffic on your practice’s website. How often is your site appearing in internet searches? How many people are visiting your site? How many of those visitors then contacted your practice? Services like Google My Business and practice management consultants can help you evaluate

ACE

- **A** = Advertisement
- **C** = Charity
- **E** = E-traffic

and increase conversion rates.

By looking inside and outside your practice, you can expand your pool of patients and boost your bottom line. ■

1. Schroeder J. How to tap into the millennial \$200 billion buying power with social media. *Forbes*. Published October 31, 2017. <https://bit.ly/2MJ6xNx>. Accessed January 30, 2019.

VICTOR DERHARTUNIAN, MD

- EyeLaser, Vienna, Austria; Warsaw, Poland; and Zurich, Switzerland
- vd@eyelaser.at
- Financial disclosure: None