



HOW TO PICK THE RIGHT OCT

with Kelly Kerksick, OD

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How to Pick the Right OCT

Kelly Kerksick, OD, graduated from Southern College of Optometry and immediately started her own private practice in 2002. Dr. Kerksick's private practice serves a community of about 8,000 people where she sees a wide range of patients, from pediatrics to geriatrics. Dr. Kerksick agreed to share her experiences and insights in owning and using the Optovue iVue OCT system in daily clinical practice.

Optical coherence tomography (OCT) is a significant financial investment for any practice. This eBook focuses on the financial aspect of acquiring an OCT, and answers questions like: How much is an OCT system? How is a practice going to pay for it? And how does the OCT system generate revenue? With the help of Dr. Kerksick, these important questions will be addressed.

How do you decide which OCT is right for your practice?

Dr. Kerksick purchased her first Optovue iVue OCT in 2009 while attending a local optometric meeting. She chose the Optovue system because it was a fully-featured OCT with retina, optic nerve, anterior segment and wellness scans that was also incredibly easy to use. She raves about how this valuable advantage allows her to quickly and easily train her staff, enabling them to rapidly begin using OCT technology.

Dr. Kerksick found that local company representatives are very knowledgeable about the different instruments on the market and are best suited to help determine the system that best fits the needs of the practice.

Once the system has been chosen, the sales rep can bring it into the practice for a demonstration on patients and to help the technical staff understand its features and benefits. Additionally, the sales rep can help to structure the financial aspects of the purchase so that the equipment is purchased under a payment schedule the practice can afford. As an added bonus, when purchasing a new OCT through the company, a one-year warranty is included with the sale.

How will the practice pay for the OCT system?

There are several ways to pay for an OCT system including an outright purchase, bank financing or an equipment lease. It is best to consult with your financial adviser to determine which option best fits the needs of your practice, and then to work with your sales representative on the specific terms of the sale.

How does an OCT system generate revenue?

A common oversight most optometrists make when considering the return on investment of an OCT system is assuming the instrument cannot be financially justified due to a lack of ocular disease in the practice's current patient population. OCT technology is invaluable in aiding in the diagnosis of ocular conditions that occur across all age groups. The iWellness Exam was created with the intent of providing a quick and easy way for optometrists to assess for early changes in the structure of the eye that might indicate pathology. Dr. Kerksick reinforces this point by stressing that "an OCT exam with a wellness scan of the retina and ganglion cell complex (GCC), like the iWellness Exam on the iVue system, helps me to identify signs of disease in the retina." Depending on the pathology identified, the optometrist often ends

up managing the medical condition until referral to an ophthalmologist is deemed appropriate. Upon review of the revenue statistics of her practice, Dr. Kerksick highlights that “50% of the OCT revenue is from billable scans with a qualifying medical diagnosis, but the other 50% comes from the out-of-pocket fees that patients pay for the iWellness Exam. In fact, the wellness aspect alone generates enough to cover the expense and payment of the instrument.”

As part of her office protocol, an iWellness Exam is offered to all patients over 18 years of age. “With one simple scan, you can see if the patient has a higher risk for retinal diseases,” says Dr. Kerksick. The iWellness Exam is a \$39 out-of-pocket expense for the patient because a qualifying medical diagnosis is required to bill the insurance company for the OCT scan. She reveals that 90% of the patients accept this out-of-pocket expense, especially if the patient is educated about the importance of the scan. Dr. Kerksick further explains, “If I uncover signs of pathology with the iWellness scan, I am able to bring the patient back for medical testing (running a full threshold OCT scan), bill medical insurance, and build the medical aspect of the practice.”

As an example, Dr. Kerksick mentions that patients who consent to the iWellness Exam, and are identified as high risk for macular degeneration, return for additional testing thereby providing the opportunity for her to educate them about the importance of sunglasses. As a result, “we found that sunglass sales have increased 40% in these patients. Furthermore, they have increased 18% in total for the practice as a result of the OCT system because we are able to show patients how and why UV protection is so important. Therefore, when optometrists are working out the math on whether or not they can afford the instrument, it is important to take into consideration all of the

practice-building benefits, such as increasing revenue in other aspects of the practice as a result of having the instrument.”

In conclusion, Dr. Kerksick stresses, “iWellness is one of the best things we can do to drive more comprehensive care to the patient.” She continues, “If the patient is thoroughly educated on the benefits of the iWellness scan and understands how this information can help their doctor provide better care, they truly appreciate the advanced technology and are willing to pay for the service.” Additionally, these patients often refer other people to her office, as do other nearby optometrists who do not yet have the technology.

How is an OCT exam billed?

In general, Dr. Kerksick uses three CPT codes to bill for an OCT exam and discloses that reimbursements will range depending on the insurance carrier.

Concluding remarks:

The cost of an OCT system may seem overwhelming at first; however, incorporating the technology helps to build and expand the medical aspects of the practice. This creates revenue directly as a result of the OCT exams performed, as well as indirectly generating other revenue in the office (e.g., sunglass sales), to help make the initial investment feasible for any practice.