

THE ROLE OF EMPHATIC COMMUNICATION AND PHYSICIAN GENDER IN SCLERAL LENS PRACTICE

Daddi Fadel, *DOptom, FSLs, FBCLA*

CONTEXT

- When fitting scleral lenses (SLs), there are psychological aspects for both patients and eye-care professionals (ECPs).
- SL patients have particular personalities and general needs.
- Empathic communication and dedicating enough time to listen and understand patients' emotions and needs may increase SL success and patient's overall satisfaction.
- Physician gender presents variations in interpersonal aspects of medical practice.

PURPOSE

To assess:

- The general pattern relationship between ECPs and SLs patients.
- How empathic communication is associated with SL success and patient's overall satisfaction.
- ECPs' gender effects in empathic communication.

METHODS

- An online survey regarding the relationship between patients and their ECPs .
- The survey generated 62 responses from patients wearing SLs and hybrid contact lenses.

RESULTS

- Participants were majorly females (80.6% female and 19.4% male).
- ECPs were mainly optometrists (86% vs. ophthalmologists 14%).
- The rating of ECPs' gender did not differ (50.9% male vs. 49.1% female).
- Patients were predominantly SL wearers (96.4% SLs vs. 3.6% hybrid contact lenses).
- Patients appreciated their ECPs: 90.3% would recommend him/her to friends and relatives.

How would you rate your physician?

| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor |
|---|-----------|------|------|------|
| Listens to you | 22 | 5 | 1 | 0 |
| Explains the purpose of tests and treatments | 20 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Explains what you want to know about your symptoms and/or condition | 21 | 7 | 0 | 0 |
| Helps you deal with emotional problems related to your eye problem | 15 | 8 | 4 | 1 |
| Gives you good advice and treatment | 21 | 6 | 1 | 0 |
| Helps you understand of following his or her advice | 18 | 7 | 3 | 0 |
| Friendly and helpful to you | 24 | 3 | 1 | 0 |
| Answers your questions | 19 | 9 | 0 | 0 |
| Takes enough time with you | 18 | 6 | 2 | 0 |

| | Excellent | Good | Fair | Poor |
|---|-----------|------|------|------|
| Listens to you | 19 | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| Explains the purpose of tests and treatments | 17 | 8 | 3 | 1 |
| Explains what you want to know about your symptoms and/or condition | 18 | 6 | 4 | 1 |
| Helps you deal with emotional problems related to your eye problem | 11 | 8 | 6 | 4 |
| Gives you good advice and treatment | 14 | 10 | 4 | 1 |
| Helps you understand of following his or her advice | 12 | 12 | 3 | 2 |
| Friendly and helpful to you | 18 | 6 | 5 | 0 |
| Answers your questions | 20 | 3 | 6 | 0 |
| Takes enough time with you | 15 | 9 | 4 | 1 |

Relationship and Communication

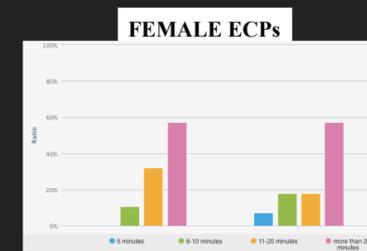
| | Yes | No | I don't know |
|---|-----|----|--------------|
| Did he/she show interest in your personal situation? | 25 | 2 | 1 |
| Does he/she ask you open questions? | 24 | 2 | 2 |
| Does he/she ask you closed ended questions? | 17 | 6 | 3 |
| Are the questions related to ocular problems? | 26 | 0 | 2 |
| Are the questions related to your personal situation? | 22 | 3 | 3 |
| Does he/she make it easy for you to tell him or her about your problem? | 24 | 3 | 1 |
| Does he/she involve you in decisions about your eye care? | 25 | 2 | 1 |

| | Yes | No | I don't know |
|---|-----|----|--------------|
| Did he/she show interest in your personal situation? | 20 | 6 | 3 |
| Does he/she ask you open questions? | 20 | 7 | 2 |
| Does he/she ask you closed ended questions? | 17 | 9 | 3 |
| Are the questions related to ocular problems? | 24 | 1 | 4 |
| Are the questions related to your personal situation? | 18 | 9 | 2 |
| Does he/she make it easy for you to tell him or her about your problem? | 19 | 8 | 2 |
| Does he/she involve you in decisions about your eye care? | 22 | 3 | 4 |

EMPATHIC COMMUNICATION INCREASES RATE SUCCESS OF SCLERAL LENSES

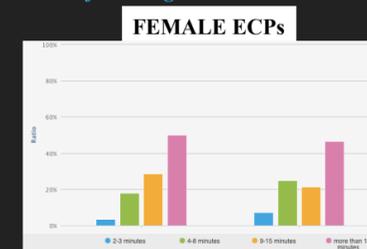
FEMALE ECPs ENGAGE IN MORE EMPHATIC COMMUNICATION

Time of communication

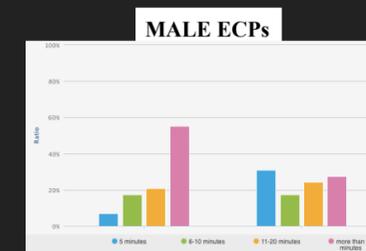


Duration of the consultation visit

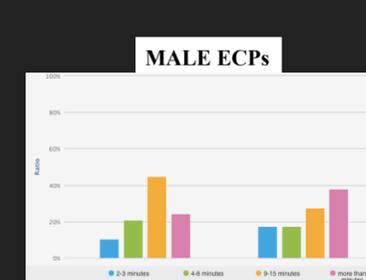
Time of wording



Duration of your Physician total wording



Duration of the consultation visit



Duration of your Physician total wording

What can your ECP do better?

| FEMALE ECPs | MALE ECPs |
|--|---|
| Allow me one additional trial | Try to work me in when they forgot to get my lens oordered. I had to wait a total of 6 weeks to get my lens and see the doc |
| Na | Write down the condition/diagnosis for me |
| Listen to my needs and opinions | Get involved more. Ask more questions. |
| Nothing to suggest for what she can do better but would be great if she worked full time rather than part time to have more days of the week that she sees patients in clinic. | There is always something that needs improvement |
| Invest a perfect cornea transplant for SJS patients, ha! 💜 | explain the difference in coatings and lenses..not sure what i have |
| Shorter time interval between lens changes | Better technology. |
| Be less rushed, improve bedside manners and interest in psychological well-being | |

ECPs' Failure

- Patients who would not recommend their ECPs to others, rated their ECPs good or fair.
- Communication with patients was more physician-centered: ECPs' total wording was higher than patients' total wording.
- Patients' requests form their ECPs were: To listen to their needs and opinions and manage for better communication.

| FEMALE ECPs | MALE ECPs |
|--|--|
| Work for free. LOL | More written instructions available |
| Listen to me. Give better explanations of why things are happening and what complications can occur. Keep up to date with evidence based practice. | Comprehensive eye exam |
| Have more appt availability | Nothing |
| Listen. Learn about adaptability in disabled users and how to coach them & think outside the box to resolve physical challenges. | Hasn't offered extended resources. |
| Unknown | First visit depended upon staff to give out written materal--didn't happen |
| Listen, listen, listen | Referrals to another doctor that may be able to provide a better result |
| Nothing. Can't think of anything that needs improving. | Provide written instructions. |
| Obtain more knowledge on scleral lens. I heard yesterday they are working on it. | Sometimes hard to get to see him because he is i. 2 different offices |
| DK | He already strives to do his best. |
| Listen and try to understand what his patient is experiencing | Nor sure... |
| Can't tink of anything he can improve upon. | Have more days in the office. He currently only works two days a week. |
| | Weekend visits would be great |
| | Educate himself. Educate patient. Stop going back back and forth between patients. Care. |
| | Let me go to a personal physician closer to me. |

CONCLUSION

- Empathic communication increases rate success of SLs.
- Female ECPs engage in more communication that can be considered more patient-centered and have significantly longer visits than their male colleagues.
- Female spent more time, had more interest in patients' personal situation, were more friendly and helpful, and involved patients more in decisions about their eye care.