

# Highlights

## AOA 2003 New Technology Survey<sup>1</sup>

**Clinical Uses of New Technologies.** The New Technology Survey examines the extent and uses of technology in optometric practice during 2003. The first part of the survey indicates the percentage of optometrists who (1) already own a specific technology in a clinical setting at the time the survey was conducted and (2) the percentage of all respondents who intend to acquire initially or replace the technology during the next six months. The automated perimeter (90.8 percent), auto-refractor (68.0 percent) and the fundus/retinal camera (57.8 percent) are the most common technologies currently owned by optometrists in their clinical practices. Ophthalmic lasers (6.1 percent), topographical electroretinograms (0.6 percent) and ultrascope biomicroscopes (0.4 percent) are currently found least in optometric offices. Approximately one-third (31.0 percent) of the respondents reported that they currently have equipment for use outside of the office.

### Percent ODs Utilizing Technologies in Clinical Practice, 2003

Technology	Currently	Planned
A/B scan ultrasound	9.9 %	1.3 %
Anterior segment camera	35.9 %	3.6 %
Automated perimeter	90.8 %	5.1 %
Automated refracting lane	11.7 %	1.6 %
Auto-refractor	68.0 %	5.0 %
Computerized digital-capture imaging system	25.9 %	7.5 %
Corneal topography unit	37.8 %	7.3 %
Full retinal thickness analyzer	10.4 %	0.3 %
Fundus/retinal camera	57.8 %	6.9 %
Ophthalmic lasers	6.1 %	0.3 %
Optic nerve head analyzer	17.6 %	4.1 %
Pachometer	38.3 %	20.3 %
Portable equipment for offsite use	31.0 %	1.6 %
Scanning laser ophthalmoscope	6.3 %	1.6 %
Topographical electroretinograms	0.6 %	0.1 %
Ultrascope biomicroscope	0.4 %	0.2 %

**Practice Management Uses of New Technology.** A second part of the New Technology survey reviewed which types of practice management software optometrists utilized in the offices in 2003 and whether they intended to obtain such software within the next six months. Respondents were asked to indicate which

<sup>1</sup> A stratified random sample (4,000 AOA members) was sent a copy of this survey in the fall of 2003. The survey response rate was 40.8 percent (n = 1630).

practice management and other software packages they utilized in their offices. Practice management software to support billing activities (82.2 percent), electronic claim processing (79.4 percent) and patient recall programs (77.6 percent) were most widely found in optometric offices. Patient communications (other than recall) (30.4 percent), electronic medical/patient records (19.2 percent) and prescription systems (19.0 percent) are currently found least in OD offices.

**Percent ODs Utilizing Practice Management Software, 2003**

Technology	Currently	Planned
Appointments and scheduling	55.8 %	8.0 %
Billing	82.2 %	6.5 %
Bookkeeping	75.2 %	5.3 %
Electronic claims processing	79.4 %	9.2 %
Electronic medical/patient records	19.2 %	8.1 %
Inventory	30.9 %	7.2 %
Marketing	34.0 %	4.0 %
Optical lab orders via the internet	55.5 %	7.5 %
Patient communications (other than recall)	30.4 %	6.6 %
Prescriptions	19.0 %	4.0 %
Recall	77.6 %	6.5 %

**Practice Management or Other Software Utilized by ODs, 2003**

Software	Percent	Software	Percent
AlphaMed	0.1 %	OD Professional	0.6 %
Eye Base P.E.	0.3 %	OfficeMate	24.1 %
EyeCare Advantage	8.4 %	Optimeyes MBA	0.8 %
EyeCom	2.8 %	Optivision	0.1 %
E-Z Frame	3.7 %	Paradigm	0.3 %
ifa Eyecare Software	0.0 %	RLISYS Pract. Man.	11.0 %
Maxim Eyes	6.3 %	Practice Maximus	1.2 %
MISYS PM	0.5 %	Practice View	0.3 %
Next Gen	0.6 %	VersaSuite	0.1 %
Other	43.1 %		

**Internet/Web Use.** The third part of the New Technology Survey asked questions about the use of the internet, computer capabilities, e-mail and other related questions. More than nine out of ten optometrists (93.5 percent) reported that they had access to the internet at the office. Even more (95.7 percent) had access to the internet in their homes.

Four of five ODs (81.4 percent) indicated that they used e-mail on a regular basis. Nearly half said they subscribed to on-line newsletters or participated in discussion groups or list services. Seven in ten have visited the AOA website. More than a third of the respondents (37.8 percent) used dial-up access to the internet, while two-thirds (66.3 percent) utilized broadband via a cable modem or DSL. A small percentage of the ODs (4.4 percent) used T1 or higher.

One optometrist in three (34.3 percent) employed a privately-owned website for purposes of marketing his/her practice. A majority of ODs (56.4 percent) used a sponsored website (e.g., VSP) to market their practices. Only some optometrists (16.5 percent) routinely captured and updated their patients' e-mail addresses. Survey participants were asked to indicate for which of the following activities they utilized the internet:

#### Activities Utilizing the Internet, 2003

Activity	Percent
Claims submission	87.5 %
Clinical information	50.8 %
Continuing education credits	30.2 %
E-mail communication with patients	28.0 %
Off-line data storage of patient records	6.0 %
On-line access to professional publications/inform.	63.6 %
Patient education via a website	19.6 %
Patient newsletter via e-mail	2.5 %
Product information from manufacturers	50.3 %
Telemedicine/consultations	10.0 %

**Other Uses of New Technology.** The last section of the 2003 New Technology Survey asked optometrists about their other uses of new technologies. For example, more than half of all ODs (52.7 percent) currently order on-line from a vendor's website. Nearly one-third (31.3 percent) currently order from a buying group's website. During the six months prior to the survey, ODs were asked to estimate the percent of items listed below they ordered on-line via the internet. Two out of five ODs (40.4 percent) engaged in other types of on-line ordering as well. About one in ten optometrists (11.1 percent) utilized computer-assisted lens and frame selection within their dispensaries.

#### On-line Ordering During Last 6 Months, Mean Percent, 2003

Item	% Ordered On-Line
Frames	25.1 %
Lenses	49.5 %
Contact lenses	47.8 %
Samples of Rx pharmaceuticals	26.7 %

**Optometrists, who were not yet making widespread use of on-line ordering, were asked when they planned to start ordering on-line through a website:**

**When Plans for Ordering on-Line**

<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>1-3 months</b>	<b>22.9 %</b>
<b>4-6 months</b>	<b>23.7 %</b>
<b>7-9 months</b>	<b>13.7 %</b>
<b>10-12 motnhs</b>	<b>39.7 %</b>

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