



# The role of the pharmacist in improving glaucoma compliance

Amongst all treatable diseases, glaucoma is one of the most likely to have poor patient compliance. In fact, as many as one half of all glaucoma patients fail to take their eye drops correctly.

## Treatment failure or poor compliance?

Glaucoma is a classic late onset condition with over 4% of the over 65s with the disease. And the percentages are on the increase.

Many individuals are unaware that they have glaucoma until late in the course of the disease. In the most common types of chronic glaucoma, it's rare to have any symptoms such as pain, redness or change in vision until the optic nerve and ganglion cells are significantly damaged or intra-ocular pressure (IOP) reaches high levels.

With little or no symptoms, it's hard to make early diagnoses let alone convince many patients of the need to undergo treatment. Hence the initiatives, backed by the RNIB and International Glaucoma Association to encourage regular eye check-ups for the elderly and at-risk patients.

A significant amount of treatment failure is due to poor patient compliance and this can lead to the progression of glaucomatous damage, the need to prescribe more potent drugs or more complex therapy regimes.

## A helping hand to improving compliance

It is up to the glaucoma specialist to prescribe the right medication regime for the individual patients but what can

you do as the pharmacist to help your customers?

- Clearly and correctly label medication with intended dosing in as large a print font size as possible.
- Suggest they keep their medication somewhere visible such as next to their toothbrush as a reminder
- Ask if they know the correct method for instilling their eye drops. Offer them a patient instruction leaflet or suggest they ask their clinic or community nurse to show them..
- Ask if they are having difficulty self-administering. If they are having problems aiming or squeezing the bottle or are frightened of the bottle nozzle coming into contact with their eye, suggest they try an eye drop dispenser aid. There are a few on the market but only one is available on prescription- Opticare Eye Drop Dispensers- and is designed for most round and oval shaped plastic bottles"
- Point out the colour of the cap or the shape and size of the bottles if they are taking more than one eye drop medication. This will avoid



confusion about which drugs to take when.

Helping these customers to help themselves will encourage regular use of eye drop medication and, along with the latest glaucoma medical therapy, you may help prevent their condition from deteriorating further and may

even help prevent their sight loss.

Information leaflets or posters for pharmacists about Opticare and patient compliance can be requested from Cameron Graham Limited on 01484 667822 or by visiting [www.opticare.org.uk](http://www.opticare.org.uk)

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**Do you know someone who has difficulty instilling eye drops?**

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