



Trends in UK

Dr Philip Morgan reports on the 17th annual Eurolens Research survey into contact lens prescribing habits

In the mid 1990s, Nathan Efron and I were frustrated at the lack of public domain information about contact lens prescribing in the UK and, with some funding from the sponsors of Eurolens Research, we set about surveying practitioner colleagues around the country about the lens types they were using. This work has continued each year since 1996¹⁻¹⁶ and with the help of colleagues around the world, we now undertake the same exercise in about 40 markets each year.

From the start, we decided that a proactive approach was best for this form of assessment. In the UK, 1,000 registered practitioners (700 optometrists and 300 contact lens opticians) are randomly selected from the GOC register, and each is sent a paper questionnaire with a reply-paid envelope to provide information about the first 10 patients fitted with contact lenses after receipt. We capture data about the following: date of fitting, new fit or refit, age and sex of patient, lens material, lens design, frequency of replacement, days per week of wear, modality (daily or extended wear) and care system.

In 2012, we received information about 755 contact lens fits from 54 contact lens opticians, 21 optometrists and one other undefined practitioner. As before, we noted that the average age of fitting was higher than many assume, at 36.6 years, up slightly from 2011. Females accounted for 66 per cent of lens fits; 58 per cent were described as 'new fits' (vs refits) and three quarters of lenses were prescribed to 'full time' (ie four days a week of wear or more) wearers.

Rigid vs soft lens fits

Rigid lenses remain a minority of lens fits, accounting for 4 per cent of new fits in 2012, compared with 13 per cent of refits (Figure 1).

Soft lens details

Soft lenses fabricated from silicone hydrogel materials are the lens type

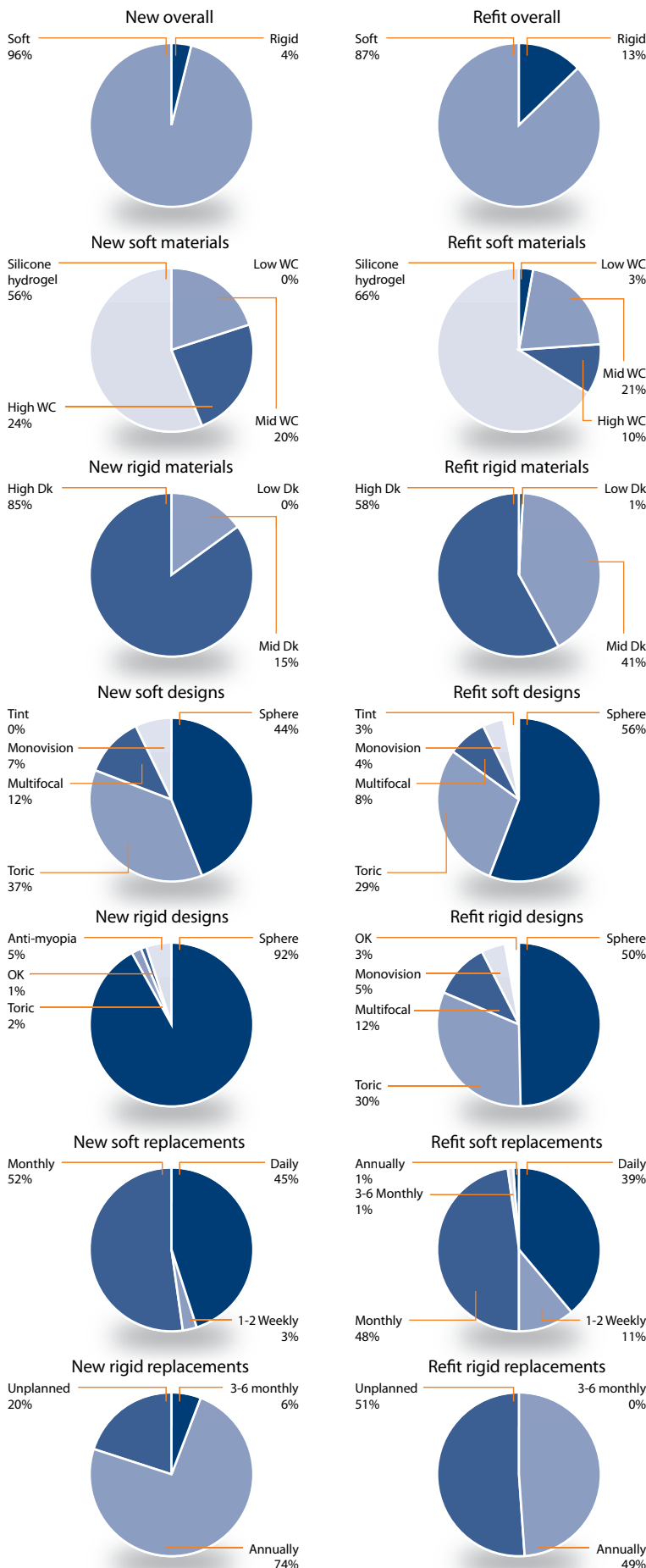


Figure 1
Major findings from the 2012 survey



contact lens prescribing 2012



Jeremy Maude/Mood Board/Rex Features

Females accounted for 66 per cent of lens fits

of choice in the UK; for example, two thirds of soft lens refits use this material type. Indeed, if non-daily disposable spherical soft lenses only are analysed, 92 per cent of such lenses prescribed are silicone hydrogels. In terms of lens design, multifocals and monovision now account for a total of 19 per cent of new fits. Toric lenses are 37 per cent of new soft fits (or 41 per cent if only spheres and toric are considered). There has been a continual rise since 1998 in the proportion of toric lenses prescribed, reflecting increasing product performance and practitioner confidence with this lens type (Figure 2). The replacement intervals for soft lenses are dominated by daily disposables (45 per cent of new fits) and monthly replaced lenses (52 per cent of new fits). Extended wear fits accounted for 0.8 per cent of new fits and 11.0 per cent of refits, respectively. Multipurpose solutions accounted for 91 per cent of care systems prescribed for soft lenses.

Rigid lens details

Rigid lens prescribing was similar to previous years. Low Dk lenses were rarely prescribed, and some orthokeratology fitting (3 per cent of refits) was measured. About half of all rigid contact lenses prescribed were done so on a planned replacement basis. ●

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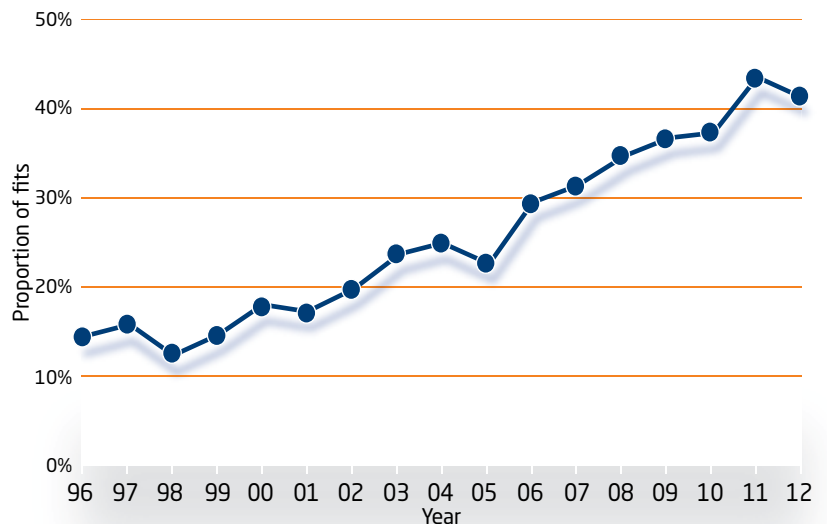


Figure 2 Prescribing of soft toric lenses (of spheres and torics only) 1996-2012