



# Optrafair through a lens

In part one of a two-part report, *Optician* presents a round-up of the lens action at Optrafair

**U**ndoubtedly the biggest lens related story at the show was PPG's UK launch of its Tribrid material with Norville, Seiko and Shamir acting as its initial suppliers.

'Tribrid material represents the next evolution in lens material technology,' said Frédéric Lefranc, PPG director of prescription sales. 'It expands upon the foundation of Trivex material that the industry has come to trust – clarity, light weight, strength and UV protection – and it makes those desirable attributes available in a thinner lens to meet the everyday visual needs of patients with higher prescription requirements.'

Lefranc cited a strong commitment to research and development as the underlying factors behind the material. 'During the process we continually asked ourselves: how can we add value? The economic conditions are not particularly positive but the way forward is still to develop innovative products.'

A key role in bringing the material to market was played by Thai Optical Group, a longtime dedicated partner of PPG. The company focused its lens manufacturing teams on developing the parameters and processes to successfully manufacture and commercialise lenses made with Tribrid. Thai Optical now supplies Norville, Seiko and Shamir with semi-finished lenses for the companies to turn into prescription lenses.

Tribrid, which has been in development since the mid-2000s, is the first new lens material to enter the UK market in several years and is thought to be particularly suitable for rimless frames.

'While spectacle lens manufacturers continue almost on a daily basis to launch new freeform lens designs to the market, it is a very rare occurrence for companies to launch brand new lens materials,' said Paul Walden, marketing director of the Norville Group. 'We believe that the launch of Tribrid material brings another level of sophistication to the higher end optical lens channel with this new 1.60 index product that will allow us to offer the very best solutions for higher powered



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prescriptions and especially so for rimless spectacles. The combination of both technologies – production and material collectively – enables 12 lens types across white and Transitions lenses to be simultaneously launched. It is a truly magnificent achievement.'

According to PPG the material is suited to patients with higher prescriptions within the  $\pm 3.00$  to  $\pm 7.00$  dioptres range. The material features optical clarity (Abbe number 41), lightweight comfort (density 1.23 grams per cubic centimetre), thinness (refractive index 1.60), impact resistance (withstands more than 160 times the energy of the US Food and Drug Administration drop ball test) and protection (100 per cent protection from ultraviolet radiation).

## Snappy inserts

Optical industry stalwart Bob Forgan was showing off the Aquaviz water sports mask on the Anglo Italian stand.

'What makes Aquaviz so innovative is the snap-in insert containing the wearer's prescription lenses, which can be glazed just like a regular plastic frame,' commented Forgan. 'It can even include bifocals and varifocals, and fits easily into the specially designed watertight goggles.'

He went on to explain that the snap-in insert has been designed to sit the same distance away from the eyes as most regular glasses, meaning a prescription does not have to be adjusted. Furthermore the price of the product is kept relatively low as no specialist processing is required.

Forgan also offered a look at his next innovation: a new water resistant lens called Aqua Pro Fog Free. The product combines certain hydrophobic and hydrophilic properties to prevent fogging and took over two years to develop.

The impact made by Nikon's highly visible and colourful stand in Birmingham was underlined when the company was presented with an OptraAward for Best Stand Design in the self build category. New on the award-winning stand was the Capture-i measuring device, launched at this year's Optrafair.

'This is one of the most accurate and consistent iPad measuring devices available,' noted Kevein Gutsell, professional services director at Nikon. 'It was very well received by visitors to the stand who tried this exciting new technology and many decided it is exactly what they need in practice.'

'Alongside the new Capture-i, our



**Paul Walden: Tribrid material brings another level of sophistication to the higher end optical lens channel**



iPad demo software, Imagine-i, further enhances the ability of the eye care professional to demonstrate the benefits of quality coatings, better progressive lenses and the improvement in vision performance to be expected by purchasing specialist lenses.'

Gutsell said in terms of actual lenses it was in fact the e-life series of lenses and coatings which proved to be of greatest interest to most visitors. This series of lenses was said to provide better quality of vision for presbyopes and pre-presbyopes who spend time on computers, iPads and smartphones.

'The vision and commercial importance of additional pairs of spectacles cannot be underestimated in challenging economic conditions,' said Gutsell. 'SeeCoat Blue ensures the effect of blue light emitted by such devices is minimised due to reflection of this high energy light from the front surface.'

## Reverse engineering

The Shamir stand was busy as always, with attendees drawn to several new concepts on display. The company's progressive lens, the Autograph III, aims to provide a clear and comfortable visual experience by handling individual issues of hyperopic and myopic presbyopes while minimising postural discomfort and unnecessary head movements through ergonomic design.

Shamir said that the R&D team focused on the fact that although their lens design is the same, each patient's perceived viewing field is significantly different based on their prescription. A minus power lens increases the field of view while a positive power lens has the effect of reducing the field of view. This results in hyperopic patients experiencing a narrower viewing field than that experienced by their myopic counterparts. By applying reverse engineering to this problem the Autograph III is said to provide an improved viewing experience for all patients through Shamir's Eye-Point Technology III.

Also new was the Shamir Spark lens measuring tool, that is said to enable the quick and precise gathering of ophthalmic measurements through a simple one-click system. The tool is compatible with the Shamir Online ordering system, which offers advanced features including a web thickness calculator and shape manager.

Norville was pleased to have lenses made from the new Tribid material in its catalogue for the show. 'I'm sure we will get back to Gloucester next



**Aquaviz can be glazed just like a regular plastic frame**

week and will already have received our first request from people who love Trivex and have been waiting to get their higher prescription in a higher refractive index product,' commented Walden. 'I'm actually optimistic about the market, I get the feeling all the people here are up for it – whether they are in the profession or manufacturing. The recession is there and it has been for years now but it's not going to stop us talking about new product.'

## Night driving

Walden remarked on the level of interest in Vistamesh, a lens with a mesh system of micro-engravings all over the surface and used by people for screen work. Norville has been working with it for three years but has found of late that it is increasingly being used as a night driving lens.

'Vistamesh is a dye tint – pinky-brown and very light with 80 per cent light transmission and a hard MAR coating,' noted Walden. 'At first we were using it for people using VDUs [visual displays units] and we've had many examples of it helping with symptoms of headaches. More recently it has had success in combating ghosting and images from halogen headlights while driving at night – problems which are particularly prevalent in post-corrective surgery and higher myope patients. It is difficult for us in some ways because it is not entirely clear how this works – I think the mesh is acting as a polariser in some way, bringing the light in uniformly rather than letting it bounce around the surface of the lenses.'

Jai Kudo Lenses used Optrafair as the launch pad for a new lens, adding the Confidence to its Wideview range of back surfaced freeform progressives.

'It's been a long time coming and the lens is finally here,' commented Justyn Walcott, lens account manager at Jai Kudo Lenses. 'We've had this in development over the past year

and the patient trials went very well. There was a delay in bringing the product to market due to some branding issues and as there's no better place to launch a product than Optrafair we decided to wait for it. It's great to have the chance to show our products to an informed audience and people are responding to it very well, it is too early to know for sure but all the signs are that this is going to do really well for us.'

## Measure of success

Fresh from winning the Lens Product of the Year at the Optician Awards for its Varilux S-Series, Essilor was showing off its new M'eye Fit Touch measuring device.

'This is the smaller and more compact alternative to our premium Visioffice system,' commented Paul Cumber, instruments manager of Essilor UK and Ireland. 'It takes pictures, it takes measurements and has a lot of specialist software on it. The software can demonstrate the various lenses. For example, looking at a lens with an anti-reflection coating on it, the M'eye Fit can show you the glare you get without such a coating and how it is better with it. Similarly there is a video that shows the lack of distortion experienced around the edge of the Varilux S-Series lens. There are lots of little pieces like these that can help with decision making and sales. It is also a very attractive piece of kit – it looks very elegant on the dispensing table – while retaining robustness.'

Essilor was also using Optrafair to test out the Airio, a potential new waiting room device, with a view to launching to market if sufficient interest was generated. The Airio features lens information so patients can inform themselves of their options while they wait. The device can also be used to show videos.

Alongside the Airio on display was the Activ'screen Junior, a waiting room station designed for children. It features touch screen games with optically relevant messages. For example one game involved putting sunglasses on cartoon children around a swimming pool and informed the player about the dangers of ultraviolet light.

A look at the Visioffice II showed that the new model is more refined in design than its predecessor, with a taller mirror unit and a higher resolution screen. 'The improved camera can now be adjusted to a lower height, which is much better for wheelchair users and children,' added Cumber. ●