



There were two big themes running through the offerings from lens companies in Paris this autumn. While top end freeform lenses were very much in demand, it was office lenses and iPad-based dispensing apps that lens companies wanted to talk about.

Perhaps the highest profile, not surprisingly in France, was taken by Essilor and the launch of its Silmo d'Or winning Varilux S lens (*Optician* 21.09.12). Although the lens is a full progressive, it is designed for wearers using new technology devices putting a greater emphasis on near vision.

Other benefits of the lens are stability in motion and a wide field of view. Sixte de Bernardy of Essilor Europe described the cellular structure of the lens created during the innovative Nanoptix manufacturing process. The lens is made using a system which achieves the required powers by taking material from both sides of the lens. Reducing the amount of material results in a lighter lens with fewer aberrations. Binocularity and the dominant eye are also taken into account to produce a personalised lens which Essilor claims provides superior vision.

Running for office

To counter the Varilux S, Carl Zeiss Vision was highlighting its Superb lens (*Optician* 13.07.12) which it claims already has many of the benefits of the Varilux S including binocularity.

On the stand, CZV's main thrust was in another direction. Product manager Thibaud De Marchi said that while all of the lens companies had an office product none stood out from the crowd and such lenses remained a niche product. He said where CZV's new office lens product differed (*Optician* 13.08.12) was that it allowed the wearer to determine the working distance based on their environment. For the French market this offered an exciting second pair opportunity for progressive wearers.

De Marchi suggested that most progressive wearers would use an office lens far more than a traditional progressive. However, insurance payments for replacement pairs required a lens suitable for driving, which meant the primary pair would always remain the full progressive. Office lenses have always been a tiny part of the market but in reality it is the lens people need most, he said.

Having a traditional progressive

Near vision in Paris

Lens companies were highlighting their latest progressive products at the recent Silmo Exhibition. The focus was on innovative designs in a world of smartphones and tablet computers



The buzz on the Seiko stand at Silmo was all about the digital multitool

and an office lens based on the same design made switching between pairs seamless. 'We are trying to build a new package around this idea,' he added. 'In France, people are used to getting a second pair, so why not give them something that's useful?'

'We are trying to develop this segment because there's a positive for us and a positive for the consumer.'

Shamir was combining the two trends of tablet computer and office lenses with its Silmo d'Or nominated Autograph Intouch (*Optician* 14.09.12). This lens concentrates on vision in the 40-70cm range, typically the distance at which digital devices are held.

Jeremy Benharous, commercial manager for the south west of France,

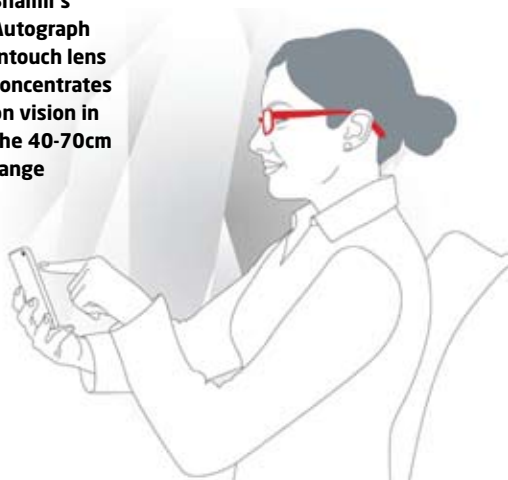
said new presbyopes were a different generation whose lives were filled with smartphones and iPads. He said you read a book at 40cm, but when you use an iPad it's more likely to be at 60cm or 70cm. This is still a full progressive design but special attention is paid in the near to 2m region. 'There are no new additional calculations for the optician so it's simple,' he added.

Digital multitool

Seiko's commercial manager, Richard Hollings, said the buzz on its stand at Silmo was all about the Seiko digital multitool. This is a comprehensive iPad App with three software packages for measurements, lens selection and frame selection. Hollings said the multitool takes advantage of the camera in the latest version of the Apple tablet. 'The Measurements software has been specifically designed to take advantage of the improved camera in the iPad 3 without the need for an additional adaptor,' he said.

Hoya's Visureal system (*Optician* 24.08.12) also walked away with a Silmo d'Or for its implementation of an iPad-based dispensing tool. This tablet-based dispensing tool takes all of the required measurements, can share the parameters taken with the Mystyle identifier and offer customer frame views. Elsewhere on the Hoya stand was the Hoyalux Lifestyle

Shamir's Autograph Intouch lens concentrates on vision in the 40-70cm range





Silmo Exhibition

V+, which was recently launched in Berlin (*Optician* 14.09.12). Following the modern trend this lens also has an option for digitally engaged younger presbyopes.

A lesser known name in the UK is Optiswiss. It uses its 40,000 point freeform HD manufacturing to make a range of specific lenses across single vision, sports and progressive designs. Marcus Vogt, sales manager, singled out the Optiswiss Dual coating for special mention. This has a hydrophobic coating on the front side of the lens and an oleophobic coating on the back where contact with skin is more likely to take place. 'This is technically difficult to do,' he said, but the result is a cleaner lens.

Dispensing system flexibility

With so many computer-based lens products on the market, practices would not be blamed for being cautious about linking up to a single dispensing system. According to Tim Baker of BIB and Anyview that no longer poses a problem.

Baker was at Silmo supporting the launch of Anyview Europe. The dispensing technology is compatible with all standard systems across a range of platforms. Traditionally this has been in the form of tower systems but now includes iPad and other tablets. He said Anyview Europe was attending its fourth Silmo and he was hoping for the recognition of the system by a major manufacturer.

'We are the UK distributor for the generic tablet and tower system and promoting that as a generic tool.' This works across all platforms so is well suited to independents, he said. Baker admits the UK has not been as quick as other markets, pointing to France's Affelou group as a large user of Anyview in continental Europe, but now the opportunity was there to adopt the technology knowing it would work with any lens brand.

Alongside the well-known names were a plethora of commodity lens suppliers, many from the Far East. Daemyung has supplied stock lenses for some of the best known names in the business for many years, but feels it is time to make a move into branded product. It has made the leap into freeform manufacturing and is now trying to break into the mainstream with its Dagas branded lenses.

'We are very interested in the European market for freeform lenses,' said Jun Young Lee, assistant marketing manager. He said he was at the show looking for labs and distributors to supply freeform. 'We do not want to do only single vision, freeform is an opportunity to increase the value.' He said Korea was renowned for its quality and Daemyung now had the ability to produce freeform product on a par with the big guys of the industry.

That won't be easy to achieve. Jenda Langmaak, head of international sales at Optovision, said as a small player flexibility was the key for the Rodenstock-owned lens provider. Customers wanted AR coating, UV and freeform technology but they also needed excellent service, top quality and good logistics. Sadly, sometimes that was not always enough. 'We left the UK market because of the price pressures driven by India and China,' she concluded. ●



Hoya's Visureal iPad-based dispensing tool won a Silmo d'Or



Vision Expo West



Wider world of learning

In the second part of our coverage of Vision Expo West in Las Vegas, **David Cartwright** ventures beyond the main exhibition hall to sample the extensive lecture programme

The glamour and glitz of Las Vegas offered an ideal setting for a multitude of frame manufacturers to show off their new products (*Optician* 19.10.12), but Vision Expo West also features an extensive CET programme, with over 250 separate lectures/workshops.

While there is a lot of clinical content on offer, a noticeable addition to the typical UK CET conference is the number of lectures and workshops aimed at the business and management side of the business. Attendees for the CET programme span the whole practice team – optometrist, dispensing optician, practice manager and optical adviser and this is reflected in the programme topics at Vision Expo being divided into five areas of interest: business solutions, medical/clinical, optical technology, contact lenses and colleague training.

Despite the variety on offer, it is very easy to track what you want to do. Delegates are able to access the full programme online in advance and plan what they want to do by day and by subject. So if you want to learn more about glaucoma or business management then a simple search will bring up all the lectures under that subject.

As with the UK, optometrists in the US are required to undertake CET to maintain registration. The amount varies between individual states; delegates from Georgia, for example, require 24 points per year, and that seems fairly typical. Registration of points is done through a barcode on each badge, which is scanned on entry to each

lecture and, after the conference, delegates receive a letter via email verifying course attendance. This letter is then submitted to the state board for licence renewal.

The cost of the CET programme is based on the number of lectures the delegate wants. Lectures can be bought by the hour at \$95, or in packages; six hours costs \$242, 18 hours \$546. Practice teams are encouraged to purchase a total 'office package' covering all members of the team and there are also various day long seminars and MBA modules.

Clinical and business

At the business end there were over 100 hours specific to managing the business of the practice. Mark Wright, OD, spoke on the essentials of financial management that enabled the optical practitioner to control expenses and evaluate performance. This presentation focused on benchmarks of practice performance taken from an MBA database to encourage goal setting for individual practices. The theory was followed by a series of implementation exercises designed to put principles into action. Dave Ziegler, OD, presented techniques to increase patient loyalty, best prescribing and dispensing premium lenses and encouraging multiple pairs. Delegates were encouraged to share their own experiences and learn from each other. A frame buyers' certificate programme had 14 hours of content dedicated to streamline the process of managing, monitoring, positioning and promoting a practitioner's frame inventory.

Social media and internet marketing was a very popular topic, with all lectures full to overflowing. Attendees said that increasingly they were wanting to use this technology as it is becoming the preferred source of information for their patients. Hands-on workshops, interactive teaching and live online reviews of existing websites and Facebook pages helped guide attendees through the process of developing, setting up and using social media along with other web tools.

Aimed at support colleagues, the Optical Bootcamps were designed as 'immersion training to jumpstart new hires and cross-train all staff'. These covered a wide range of subjects such as anatomy and physiology, eyewear sales and communications.

Over 200 hours of clinical content had much that would be seen in the UK, but with a greater emphasis on



Vision Expo features over 250 separate lectures/workshops

treatment. For example, lectures in glaucoma diagnosis and treatment were aimed at meeting the new California licence requirements. Antony Litwak, OD, discussed how to quantify glaucoma damage, how to set target pressures, how to lower IOP and how to judge progression. There was also a greater emphasis on discussion within groups. Kelly Nichols, OD, encouraged delegates to discuss diagnosis and treatment for a range of clinical presentations and used an evidence-based approach to highlight management of each case.

Student programme

The US profession appears to have a good focus on introducing students to all aspects of the profession and this is reflected in the exhibition activities and the course programmes. A separate student programme includes business lectures, advice on how to progress from student to professional and, of course, there is an organised student party.

To help students get to the show, Vision Expo awarded \$1,000 travel grants to one student from each of the 22 schools within the American Optometric Student Association. Applicants submitted a 500-word essay indicating their awareness of trade shows designed for eye care professionals, the importance of these shows in relation to their career goals, and how their attendance at Vision

Expo could benefit their career.

All students attending received free lunches, and entry into both continuing education courses and individual exhibitors' sponsor specific student courses. These may be clinical, but there was a focus on preparing students for the world of business. For instance, Allergan sponsored a student course entitled, 'Key financial knowledge to help you succeed in the real world' and Hoya sponsored 'School of Doc – Pearls for a smooth transition from student doc to professional doc'.

This year the show management tested a mentor programme, targeting third- and fourth-year optometry students, matching them with an optometrist mentor to prepare for the show and connect on site. Show organisers also scheduled numerous events designed to help students make valuable connections with colleagues, and future employers, across the country. For instance, a Job Search Meet and Greet, showcasing Vision Expo's job search portal, Vision Jobs, was held in partnership with Local Eye Site.

Summary

Vision Expo is an event that covers the whole of the optical world in one fell swoop. There is a lot to see, with new products and ideas to bring back to practice. Combine this with a trip overseas and the US exhibition is a not-to-be-missed opportunity. ●