



Technology Practice of the Year

Regular readers of *Optician* will be familiar with the name Kirit Patel. An optometrist with his own practice in Hertfordshire, Patel has long promoted the use of the latest technology in optometric practice and has written many an article describing the use of, for example, the OCT in the detection and management of conditions such as glaucoma. It was, therefore, perhaps not too great a surprise when our judges decided that, out of a strong field of contenders, Radlett Opticians, Patel's practice, deserved this year's award for Technology Practice of the Year.

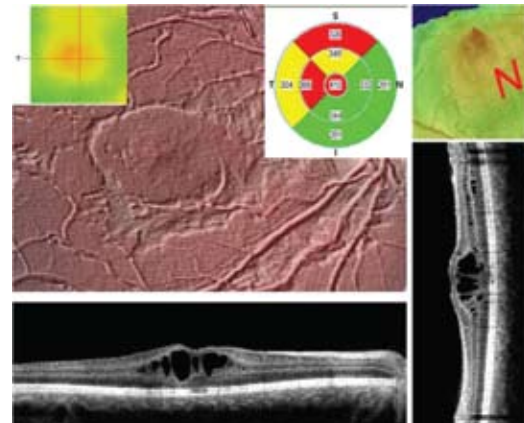
The days of the award going to the practice with the longest list of new technologies are long gone. One of the judges' key considerations is to recognise a practice where technology has been applied for the benefit of the patient and the promotion of the practice at large.

Patel has spent the last 20 years building the Radlett practice, investing in the latest consulting room and dispensing equipment, but also ensuring established equipment of proven worth is also available. For example, alongside the computerised testing charts, automated phoropter unit, RTVue OCT, GDx, pachymeter, keratometer and imaging instruments, one can find a Hess chart, an array of imaging lenses and a gonioscopy lens. The Hess chart was used recently to investigate a seven-year-old boy with a suspected orbital fracture and double vision. Twenty years ago, the practice boasted simply a boxed test chart, a slit lamp and a keratometer.

Letters of endorsement

Patel's skill in use and interpretation of the various instruments has led to him regularly receiving referrals from other professionals. As testified by many a letter of endorsement, many local doctors prefer his opinion first

Kirit Patel was presented with a second Optician Award this year in recognition of his use of the latest technology for the benefit of his patients



Kirit Patel: the ability to use to technology such as the OCT is key to retaining patients

before referring to secondary care. An eminent ophthalmologist at a recent OCT roadshow used one of Patel's referral letters as an example of what should be included in any referral based on OCT analysis.

Patel has added to this increasing profile in recent years by, alongside his regular features in this journal, presenting lectures and workshops on how to best incorporate and use the various technologies within practice.

The practice is not wholly focused on the medical clinical aspects of optometry, however. In recent years, marker pen and PD rule have been superseded by Essilor's VisioOffice system combined with an electronic ordering and photography based frame trial system. He has had patients travel from as far as the US, New Zealand and China for examinations and spectacles. Topographic assessment allows the practice to prescribe orthokeratology lenses alongside standard corrective lenses. The practice management system is entirely electronic with a personalised 'Clear VU' record system allowing full data input from the phoropter along with the ability to send e-referrals, the accuracy and clarity of the latter regularly being praised by the recipients.

Patel feels saddened that optometrists have been excluded from diabetic screening and if, we are not careful, he feels screening programmes involving

glaucoma and maculopathy could lead to technicians rather than qualified personnel undertaking this valuable work. However, he is excited that our knowledge and expertise with technology will guide the profession into the future.

'I am humbled to have won the award for technology practice and it is an honour and privilege for the practice to be recognised by my peers for using technology for the benefit of the patients,' he says. 'The most invaluable technology that my practice possesses are a good listening ear, intuition and patient empathy.'

'The importance of technology is time saving – for example, a much quicker refraction using phoropters and emailing results with a click of a button. Technology and digital imaging has allowed the practice to fine tune the already acquired skills and enable to differentiate between normal and abnormal.'

He also cautions that the risk of an optometrist with just basic equipment missing pathology cannot be underestimated in this modern world of litigation.

A justly deserved award, and one that illustrates how technology makes a difference. In Patel's own words: 'Investment, communication, knowledge and the ability to use to technology is the key to retaining patients and attracting new business.'

● **Technology Practice of the Year, sponsored by Grafton Optical and its technology partners Optovue and Reichert**

Winner Radlett Opticians, Radlett

Shortlisted
N and J Robinson Optometrists, Monkseaton
Parley Optometrists, Ferndown