

A new dimension to BIB

With a wealth of optical experience behind it, Stevenage-based BIB Ophthalmic Instruments has taken on two new computerised dispensing systems, as **Rory Brogan** discovered

BIB Ophthalmic Instruments has come a long way in the past eight years, from a start-up in a small unit, reconditioning and selling optical instrumentation, to new purpose-designed premises in Stevenage and the distribution of the latest in practice instrumentation.

The company was set up by Tim Baker in 1999, who after 18 years' experience in optics, including selling Nikon instrumentation through Young Optical, decided to go it alone. In recent months, it has moved from Buntingford in Hertfordshire to its new premises and added experienced sales staff to the mix.

Expanding into Europe

'It is important to raise our profile with new premises where we can invite clients to demonstrate our latest kit,' says Baker, who has invested £500,000 in the new set up, including £40,000 on IT. He is also working with his brother Nick Baker who has been in optics for 38 years.

'We brought Nick on board as a consultant since he has a whole raft of experience in the optical market,' he adds.

At the same time, David Breed, formerly of Topcon and Weco, has joined the company to spearhead new and second-hand equipment sales.

The moves coincide with a major new European distribution deal for the company, which has taken on two advanced computerised measuring and dispensing systems from the Korean company Viewitech in the manual AnyviewPlus and the automatic AnyviewPro.

The systems are the brainchild of an ex-employee of electronics firm LG, who, having gained 50 worldwide electronic patents, left and set up his own company. 'He is interested in virtual simulation and set up a company with state of the art manufacturing and 3-D graphic engines,' explains Baker, who has visited the Korean plant.

The AnyviewPlus provides image

The BIB team outside the new premises in Stevenage



capture of patients trying on frames and features a sophisticated three-dimensional lens dispensing software and contact lens module. 'The system is 100 per cent built in-house including the 10 mega-pixel camera which delivers the highest quality images available. This gives Viewitech the speed to stay ahead of the game, compared to other companies that rely on buying materials piecemeal in other markets and then assembling them,' adds Baker.

The unit has a robust industrial touch-screen and a flat-embedded PC on the back. It is also available with mouse and keyboard, for practices that wish to use their existing computer and monitor.

Tools to educate the consumer

One of the main attractions is the ability of the Anyview to be used as an educational tool for the consumer, for example demonstrating the meaning of conditions such as presbyopia. In this case it uses graphics to represent the effects on an early presbyope of shopping or reading a newspaper.

'It covers every dispensing scenario, from everyday prescription correction to demonstrations of more complex ocular conditions.'

The unit can also simulate the effect of wider distance visual fields and wider reading corridors in different prescriptions and lens types.

'You can educate the first-time wearer of varifocals to tilt their head

when they are going down the stairs for example, or to move their head to avoid blur at the periphery when they are driving.'

Users can also demonstrate the differences between basic, advanced and premium lenses. 'One of the hardest things to explain to customers is the difference between varifocal designs; the system achieves this using 2-D and 3-D graphic "movie" simulations,' adds Nick Baker, who explains he will work on the strategic side, targeting practices who want to build patient confidence using state of the art technology.

Tints and their gradients as well as coatings can be shown, along with the effects of waterproofing and UV protection on the lenses.

'The system is simple to navigate and you can select topics relevant to individual patients. "Frames on face" images are taken at a distance of 1 metre and take seconds to capture. Anyview can store up to 20 images which can be viewed using two, four or eight photographs at once.'

When a frame is chosen, the dispenser traces the inside of the frame for shape detection and then places centration icons over the patient's pupils. In the case of dark irides a choice of filters can be employed to make pupil detection easier.

3-D lens simulation

Along with 'Frames on face', one of the most powerful selling tools is a

Dispensing

three-dimensional lens simulation.

Based on the prescription, centration, design, index and including comparisons of single and double-sided aspherics, you can view the finished prescription, glazed or in uncut form, showing the edge thickness from all angles. 'It is designed to promote the advantages of premium lenses and to assist with frame selection. Patients can be shown the peripheral distortion inherent in lens designs and how it can be minimised using a double-sided aspheric design. It shows visual fields and unwanted astigmatic effect, which can be difficult to demonstrate in practice. Using this system removes all the demonstration paraphernalia usually found on a busy dispensing optician's desk,' adds Nick Baker.

'The contact lens module can simulate the different colours from varying manufacturers and can then be cleverly overlaid and viewed on the patient's eyes. In addition the powerful 3-D movies can show complete educational information from fitting to aftercare to lens design and much more.'

The AnyviewPro goes a stage further, automatically recording all the necessary co-ordinates and data



David Breed and Tim Baker with the new dispensing system

required by a laboratory to make a bespoke varifocal, with benefits of optimum comfort and visual field. Parameters measured include PD, pantoscopic tilt, face form angle and back vertex distance.

This can be done without human error, says Nick Baker. 'Wrongly measured varifocals are a common and costly mistake. This system is foolproof and simple to use, along with all its other functions, it will be your best friend in practice, with a solution for almost every dispensing situation.'

In addition to bringing Anyview to the European market, BIB is now the UK representative for a number of other new optical instrument manufacturers, 'We have come a long way since selling only refurbished equipment. When I started BIB it was always my intention to become a major supplier of new and innovative technology,' adds Tim Baker.

To this end, BIB now sells Italian refraction furniture, the German Bon brand of up-market slit lamps, corneal topographers and automated refraction equipment, as well as Potec automated refraction equipment and Optopol visual field screening equipment.

Now the company's business is broken down into 60 per cent new and 40 per cent reconditioned equipment, which makes it attractive to new-start practices on a limited budget.

'We're very flexible and want to try to keep that flexibility, tailor-making solutions with the freedom to meet our customers' needs. This is only the start of the journey towards becoming one of the most recognised ophthalmic equipment suppliers in the industry,' he concludes. ●

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