

Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 2007

In his report of the 12th annual Eurolens Research survey into prescribing habits, **Dr Philip Morgan** reports on a year in which silicone hydrogels stabilised, soft torics increased and the prescribing of two-step peroxides is on the decline

Our 12th annual survey into UK contact lens prescribing was conducted between January and March 2007.¹⁻¹¹ As in all previous years, we selected 1,000 practitioners (700 optometrists and 300 dispensing opticians who fit contact lenses) at random from the GOC register.

Each was sent a questionnaire with a reply-paid envelope to provide information about the first 10 patients fitted with contact lenses after receipt. For each contact lens fit, we captured 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 line with previous years, completed questionnaires were received from 118 practitioners (61 dispensing opticians, 55 optometrists and two 'not recorded'), providing information on 1,131 contact lens fits. Each fit was given a weighting based on the number of lenses fitted per year by the practitioner (based on the date information on the form) so that fits by practitioners conducting many contact lens fittings were afforded a higher weighting than those performing fewer fits.

The mean (\pm SD) age for the contact lens fits reported was 34.9 ± 14.3 years with an age range of six to 77 years. Over the past 11 years, the mean 'age at fit' for soft lens wearers has increased from about 31 to 34 years (taking a three-year moving average); for rigid lens wearers this parameter changed from 35 to 44 years, confirming the advancing age of the typical rigid lens wearer (Figure 1). As in previous years, most lens fits (61 per cent) were to females.

Rigid vs soft lens fits

Soft lenses accounted for 97 per cent

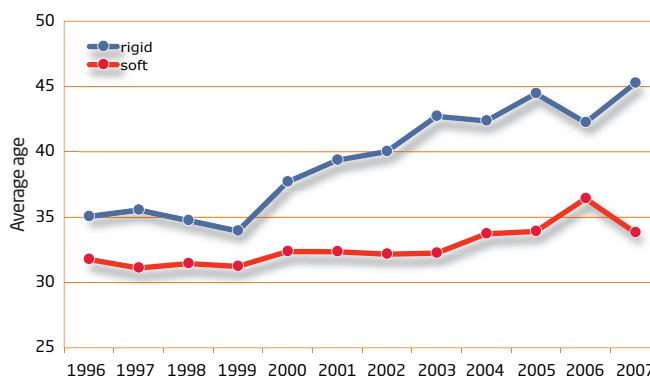


Figure 1 Average age of lens wearers

of all new fits and 84 per cent of refits (Figure 2). The number of new rigid lens fits is the lowest recorded and reflects a very gradual decline from the 8 per cent measured in 2002. As in all previous years, rigid lenses remain more popular as refits, presumably due to the fitting of existing rigid lens wearers.

Soft lens details

After the significant gains seen in 2005 and 2006, the proportion of silicone hydrogel materials prescribed remained similar for new fits in 2007 (28 per cent of fits) compared with 2006. For refits, however, silicone hydrogels are now the material of choice for UK practitioners, representing 52 per cent of fits. Very few low water content hydrogels (1 per cent of refits) are now prescribed.

Soft toric lenses accounted for 34 per cent of new soft fits; this is the highest proportion over the 12 years of this survey and reflects the simplicity of fitting and excellent clinical performance of modern soft toric lenses. Multifocal fits (5 per cent) were more common than monovision fits (2 per cent).

Soft lens replacement frequencies reflect the trends of recent years with about 40 per cent of new fits as daily disposable and the remaining lenses either 1-2 weekly or monthly lenses.

The use of extended wear lenses continues the stuttering rise we have seen since the launch of silicone hydrogels in 1999.

As in all previous years, 2007 saw more use of extended wear in cases of refits, with almost one fit in five classified as this modality – the highest value we have seen. The value for new fits (7 per cent) matches the previous high value for extended wear, suggesting that there is still strong interest in this modality by both patients and practitioners.

For soft lens care systems, only multi-purpose products (92 per cent) and one-step peroxides (8 per cent) were prescribed in 2007 (Figure 3), suggesting that the popularity of two-step peroxides has completely waned. Two-step systems accounted for one in six of all soft lens care systems prescribed as recently as 1997, so this is a significant development.

Rigid lens details

A significant shift for new fits of rigid lenses is the infrequency of spherical lens prescribing. In 2007, spheres accounted for only 29 per cent of prescribed new rigid fits, compared with 40 per cent torics and 31 per cent ortho-keratology lenses. This suggests that, increasingly, rigid lenses are being used for 'special' rather than standard fitting.

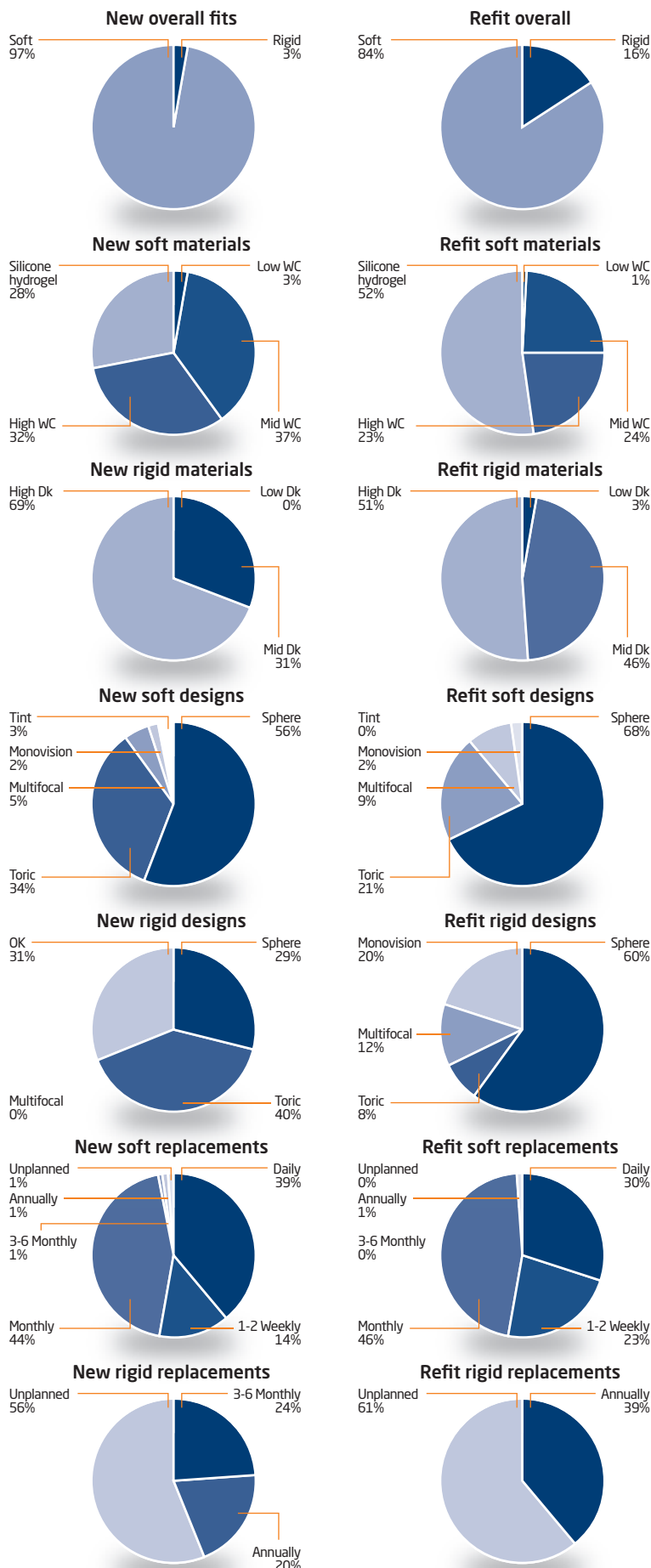


Figure 2
Principal results of the 2007 survey

Acknowledgements

This survey was funded by the sponsors of Eurolens Research: Bausch & Lomb, Advanced Medical Optics (UK), Alcon Laboratories (UK), CIBA Vision (UK), Clearlab, CooperVision, Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, Menicon Co and Sauflon Pharmaceuticals. The author would also like to thank the contact lens practitioners who anonymously participated in this survey. ●

References

- 1 Morgan PB. Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 2006. *Optician*, 2006; 231(6054): 16-17.
- 2 Morgan PB, Efron N. Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 2005. *Optician*, 2005; 229(6004): 28-29.
- 3 Morgan PB and Efron N. Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 2004. *Optician*, 2004; 227(5950): 16-17.
- 4 Morgan PB, Efron N. Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 2003. *Optician*, 2003; 225(5904): 34-35.
- 5 Morgan PB, Efron N. Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 2002. *Optician*, 2002; 223(5849): 28-30.
- 6 Morgan PB and Efron N. Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 2001. *Optician*, 2002; 221(5803): 38-39.
- 7 Morgan PB and Efron N. Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 2000. *Optician*, 2000; 219(5749): 22-23.
- 8 Morgan PB and Efron N. Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 1999. *Optician*, 1999; 217(5700): 43-44.
- 9 Morgan PB and Efron N. Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 1998. *Optician*, 1998; 216(5679): 18-19.
- 10 Morgan PB and Efron N. Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 1997. *Optician*, 1997; 214(5630): 32-33.
- 11 Morgan PB, Ramsdale C and Efron N. Trends in UK contact lens prescribing 1996. *Optician*, 1997; 213(5583): 35-36.

● Dr Philip Morgan is the director of Eurolens Research at The University of Manchester

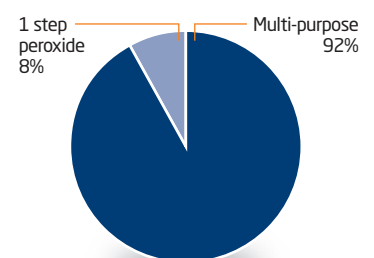


Figure 3 Soft lens care systems