



going green

CooperVision's sustainable manufacturing practices inspire practitioners to reduce, reuse, recycle—and prescribe clariti® 1 day

Not all contact lenses are created equal. Eye care professionals consider many factors in choosing which lenses to prescribe: Fit. Material. Oxygen. Modality. Cost. Do manufacturers' sustainability practices come into play? Research shows they should.

A 2020 survey¹ by The Recycling Partnership revealed that 70% of Americans would go out of their way to support a company that makes strong efforts to be sustainable. The results also showed sustainability becoming a higher priority for consumers: 78% of respondents are more conscious of supporting green/sustainable companies versus five years ago.

These trends uncover opportunities for optometry practices to differentiate themselves by implementing sustainable practices in their offices—and choosing to prescribe products from companies that do the same.

a peek behind the scenes

In 2019, CooperVision invited 20 eye care professionals to its 100,000-square-foot clariti® 1 day manufacturing facility in Alajuela, Costa Rica to see the company's commitment to minimizing its environmental impact and operating more sustainably. The three-day "clariti® 1 day experience" provided a behind-the-scenes look into how CooperVision combines state-of-the-art manufacturing with sustainability to bring the lenses to wearers around the world.



"I wish every doctor could witness the process in person," said Katie Greiner, OD, who traveled to the event from her practice at Northeast Ohio Eye Surgeons in Kent, Ohio. "I watched rainwater being collected for use in the plumbing systems. You could see sustainability in front of your eyes. I love to tell patients about that experience."

"Patients often like to hear the story behind their lenses," added Corina Buettner, OD, of Nuvo Eye Centre de L'Oeill in Ottawa and participant in the "clariti® 1 day experience."

Manufacturers are under particularly high pressure to adopt more environmentally sustainable practices and processes. In fact, 89% of contact lens wearers and 85% of eye care professionals agree that contact lens companies need to embrace sustainable manufacturing techniques.²

Over the last several years, CooperVision has become a leader in this area. Its Costa Rica facility holds the prestigious LEED® Silver certification for its environmentally conscious design and operation, which includes a high-efficiency lighting system using natural light, a vegetable oil-powered main transformer, and rainwater collection tanks. In addition, more than 95% of materials used in production—including nearly 100% of the plastic generated—are recycled, and more than 95% of the plant's electricity comes from renewable sources. For CooperVision's customers and their patients, this means clariti® 1 day is a lens they can feel good about prescribing and wearing.^{5,6}

sustainability in practice

Following the "clariti® 1 day experience" in Costa Rica, many eye care practitioners were inspired to make changes in their own practices. In the 18 months since the event, most reported starting or ramping up both contact lens and general recycling programs in their offices. Conservation has also been a focus; many have taken measures to reduce waste.

By reviewing her practice's processes, Dr. Buettner and her staff have reduced paper use by more than half. They now collect and send more documents electronically, including prescriptions to patients.

Nathalie Trottier, OD, FAAO, purchased bamboo cutlery for every employee at Centre Visuel Optika in Pointe-Claire, Quebec, and provided kits for growing their own herbs at home. She also strives to become a paperless office, and hopes that her local compost program will soon expand to include commercial properties.

Michael Cymbor, OD, of Nittany Eye Associates in State College, Pa., started a composting initiative at his main location, and said the practice utilized only compostable products at its summer picnic. An employee silverware buyback program helped eliminate the use of plasticware. And when replacing the office dishwasher, he made sure to select an energy efficient, low-water-usage model. Dr. Cymbor doesn't plan to stop there. "We're researching solar and wind turbine options, as we now always look for ways to become more sustainable," he said.

a drastic change in perspective

For one of the doctors, the experience completely changed his outlook on the importance of sustainability in his practice. When Brian Spittle, OD, of The Eye Place in Midlothian, Va., arrived in Costa Rica for the "clariti® 1 day experience", he was skeptical.

"I wasn't anti-sustainability, but it wasn't a priority. I didn't see how it affected me," he said.

Through the course of the education and discussions at the "clariti® 1 day experience", something clicked for him. Not only was sustainability beneficial to the world around him, but it could be a valuable asset to his practice as well.

"I realized—assuming all other things are equal—people will choose to do business with companies that align with their values," said Dr. Spittle. "I can set myself apart from the practice down the street."



Upon returning from Central America, Dr. Spittle and his wife, Norma Spittle, OD, implemented sweeping changes at their practice, the most significant being the addition of solar panels on the roof of their building. In just five months since installation, the panels have saved nearly 60,000 pounds of carbon monoxide emissions from entering the environment—the equivalent of planting more than 460 trees.

speaking "green" with patients

Seeing sustainability in action motivated eye care professionals to make changes to their practices, but it also transformed the way they talked to patients on the topic. And for some, it even affected their contact lens prescribing habits.

"In transitioning to daily disposables, one of the most common hesitations from my patients was increased waste," said Dr. Cymbor. "the clariti® 1 day lens—and my experience in Costa Rica—is a tool to address those concerns, allowing for more acceptance from my environmentally conscious patients."

In her own interactions, Dr. Greiner finds patients are interested in the sustainability story.

"I tell them that of all the options for 1-day lenses, clariti® 1 day is more near and dear to me because of their sustainability efforts," she said. "Since you buy 365 pairs each year, CooperVision makes them as sustainably as possible. And to top it all off, the cost of clariti® 1 day is comparable to a hydrogel lens³, so I'm giving them a significantly better product at a similar price⁴. It really is a no-brainer."



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Nuvo Eye Centre de L'Oeill



MICHAEL CYMBOR, OD
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To learn more, visit clariti.coopervision.com

1. The Recycling Partnership 2020. <https://recyclingpartnership.org/americas-prefer-sustainable-companies/> 2. CVI data on file 2020. Decision Analyst online survey with 1-day soft CL wearers in US, n=304. Top 3 box on 7 point scale. 3. CVI data on file 2020. Prospective, double masked, bilateral, randomized cross-over dispensing 1-week study, with clariti® 1 day and 1-DAY ACUVUE® MOIST in FRP SiHy wearers. N=55; p<0.01. 4. Based on 166 participating eye care professionals in a multi-national online survey, 2016. 5. n=60, FREQ group: includes 48% ACUVUE OASYS®, 27% AIR OPTIX® AQUA. Prospective, single day, randomized, double-masked, non-dispensing, contralateral eye study of habitual reusable wearers. 6. Daily disposable lenses are the healthiest way to wear soft contact lenses; SiHy oxygen delivery to minimize or eliminate hypoxia related complications during daily wear; UV blocking to help protect from the transmission of harmful UV radiation.

