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Philadelphia Eyeglass Labs Innovates, Offers Tele-Optometry



Philadelphia Eyeglass Labs (PEL), the oldest and largest independently owned optical chain in the Philadelphia area, is by definition, “old school”. Its five area locations are part of a century-long legacy of providing quality eye care to hundreds of thousands of patients.

But while the company’s longstanding connection to the communities it serves has become a Philadelphia tradition—it’s not unusual to see whole families in its stores, buying glasses together—innovation is never out of view.

“Being in eye care for so many generations means we have to stay current and adjust our model based on how people’s lives change,” says PEL’s president, Norma Meshkov, whose grandfather, Dr. Peter Messinger, founded the company nearly 100 years ago.

Change is afoot at PEL’s busy Bensalem location, where it has served the community since 1985. Starting in January 2018, tele-optometry will be introduced to patients at this location.

So how does tele-optometry work? Much like other telemedicine models, tele-optometry delivers eye care through digital ophthalmic equipment and video communications technology that allows a licensed optometrist to perform a comprehensive eye health examination remotely, while interacting with the patient visually and verbally, in real time. An optical technician is on-site, face to face with the client, aiding the optometrist working off-site.

The company that created the technology, Digital Optometrics, believes there is much to be gained by bringing

the telemedicine model to optical care. “There are many exciting elements to this innovation that benefit patients and the healthcare industry,” says founder Howard Fried. “Greater patient access to eye exams is key; with tele-optometry, patients can have an eye exam on days and times that are convenient for them, rather than being limited to the days and hours that the doctor is in the office.”

Fried also points out that with tele-optometry technology, patients receive a complete ocular health assessment. This comprehensive set of tests includes the use of a non-contact tonometer, which tests eye pressure, and a fundus camera, which sees into the back of the eye to view the retina, optic nerve, macula and vasculature. These tests help to rule out health conditions such as diabetes, hypertension and other diseases that may otherwise go undetected. That can’t be said for opticals where a simple refraction is the standard of care.

Dr. Sukumar Pandit, Director of Optometry at PEL’s Center City location, looks forward to having the technology accessible company-wide. “The ability to be in more than one place at a time... it’s like *Star Trek* is now one step closer to reality,” he jokes. “But seriously, when done properly, this model can increase convenience for both patients and doctors without compromising on the health aspect of a true eye examination. That’s something to be very excited about.”

Philadelphia Eyeglass Labs Bensalem is located at 1863 Street Rd., Bensalem. For more information and to schedule an appointment, call 215-592-8111 or visit PhiladelphiaEyeglassLabs.com. See ad, page 47.

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