

## CASE OF THE MONTH

## BUILDING PATIENT KNOWLEDGE AND TRUST:

## A new mobile app to support patients throughout their cataract surgery journey

By Nicole Kretz and Florian Kretz, MD

Patient education has a fundamental role in cataract surgery success and patient satisfaction. So that patients can apply and benefit from the information they are given, it must be delivered in an understandable manner and remembered throughout the cataract surgery journey.

The ZEISS EYEGUIDE patient app was developed as a modern tool for educating patients and helping them stay compliant during their cataract surgery journey (Figure 1). Its content includes text, video, and graphic information about vision, cataract, and cataract surgery, as well as a patient-customizable reminder tool for appointments and medication. In addition, using the online EYEGUIDE Customizer Tool, practices can easily personalize the app's content by incorporating their own pre- and post-operative checklists, articles, or links to information about the clinic, the surgeons, intraocular lenses, and other technology offerings.

At Precise Vision, we had already developed a variety of printed and digital materials for patient education. However, we thought that the EYEGUIDE app could add value as both a complement and supplement to our existing tools. Early experience with the app is already validating our expectations.

**Why did you decide to adopt EYEGUIDE?**

**Dr Kretz:** Patients undergoing cataract surgery represent a heterogeneous population, and different approaches may be needed to be successful educating and communicating with this diverse group. EYEGUIDE has features that make it appealing to different types of patients. Patients who are younger or technologically savvy are accustomed to and like using mobile apps for information and as assistive tools. The app also addresses obstacles faced in educating older individuals who can benefit from support given by family or caregivers. I have often seen older patients struggling to read printed educational materials, and then it remains unknown if they understand the information or go on to share it with others who can assist them. The app is a wonderful tool where everyone can access the educational materials. It addresses the problem of older patients misplacing printed brochures or failing to understand or just not remembering information they received verbally. With checklists provided by the

clinic and reminders customizable by the patient, the app is also a great tool for reminding patients of their eyedrop regimen, which is in my opinion critical for optimizing surgical success.

**Nicole Kretz:** We were interested in using EYEGUIDE because it seemed to offer a host of benefits. Patients undergoing cataract surgery may feel anxious about the procedure and its outcome, but these concerns can be diminished if patients are trusting of their provider and have knowledge that makes them well-prepared for the process. The app addresses both of these areas because it allows patients to gain information about their surgery, their surgeon, and the clinic through a single easily accessible platform. EYEGUIDE's customization tool that allows practices to include information about their clinic and its team is also helpful because I believe this type of knowledge builds patient trust and comfort and ultimately increases their satisfaction with the surgery journey.

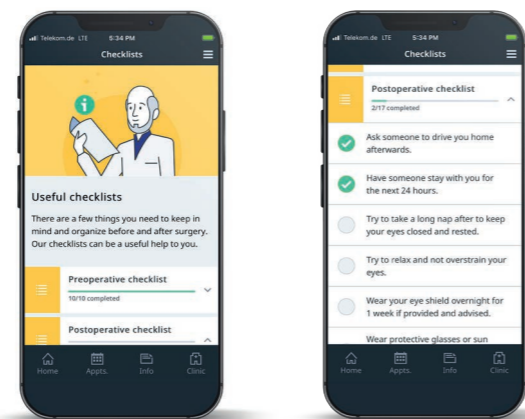


Fig. 1 The ZEISS EYEGUIDE app

A great feature of the app is that it was thoughtfully designed to be user-friendly for individuals who have some visual impairment. Not only is the font size adjustable, but the app also has a text-to-speech button.

**How did you find the process of customization and implementation?**

**Nicole Kretz:** I designed and customized the content of the app and found it was easy. I added

information about cataract surgery, our clinic, and our surgeons. I also incorporated videos, images, forms, and links to our podcasts and YouTube videos. Many of the resources we included were newly created based on searching the Internet for frequently asked questions and staff input on questions received from patients and tips on how we could make the whole cataract surgery journey harmonious for patients.

**How has the app been received by patients, family members, or caregivers?**

**Dr Kretz:** Many cataract surgery patients are very technologically savvy regardless of age, and those with a mobile phone were all interested in the app. Of the patients who did not have a mobile phone, most were happy to take the flyer we had about the app to give to their family. Feedback from patients, family members and caregivers who have used the app has been positive. Equally important, we have not gotten any calls with questions from individuals who were experiencing problems using the app.

**Nicole Kretz:** It is my impression that patients are more trusting of the content of the EYEGUIDE app than they are of information about cataract surgery they might find online or through an app store because EYEGUIDE is an app that is recommended by their provider rather than being something created by an unknown source.

I'd like to share an unexpected encounter I had with the son of one of our patients. The gentleman is a newspaper agent, and while I was meeting with him to discuss advertising in his paper, I mentioned that we had an app for cataract surgery patients. The newspaper agent told me that his mother had undergone cataract surgery at our clinic and that because of the app, he felt more confident as a family member being able to assist his mother during her journey. He remarked that in the past he would only be able to talk with his mother about information she could remember. The ability to refer to and discuss the materials on the app with his mother allowed him to help her make clear decisions about the surgical procedure, follow all of the preoperative instructions and tips, use her eye drops as directed, and keep her postoperative appointments.

**What internal feedback have you had about the app?**

**Nicole Kretz:** The app has been very well received by our refractive managers who have remarked that it is a great addition to the tools they are using. They have commented about the quality of the educational material and the value of articles about our practice. Our team members also note that patients who used the app seemed to be more confident going into their surgery. We might expect that this will lead them to have a more positive impression of their experience overall.

**Have you noticed any other impact of the EYEGUIDE app in your practice?**

**Dr Kretz:** The app has had a positive effect on workflow efficiency. Patients who installed the app before their preoperative consultation visit accessed and partly filled out online intake forms, and that saves time in the clinic.

As another benefit relating to efficiency, the overall in-clinic counseling process is shortened when patients use the app because they are well-informed about cataract surgery and their options for pseudophakic correction. In addition, patients who choose premium lenses and femtosecond laser-assisted cataract surgery have information about these options available to share and review with their family members before they come for their operative visit.

**What take home message do you have for cataract surgeons about the EYEGUIDE app?**

**Nicole Kretz:** It is a wonderful and useful tool to share with patients and their family members or caregivers. According to our experiences, the app delivers information that is important for helping patients make decisions about their surgery and have a successful outcome. It is a tool that patients can access when they are relaxed and comfortable at home and together with family members so that they can make decisions with trust and confidence.

**Dr Kretz:** I concur. With its open approach to presenting information about our practice, our staff, the surgery, and surgical options, I believe the EYEGUIDE app makes patients feel more at ease and comfortable with their decisions and their surgery, and it is my personal opinion that its tools for increasing patient compliance can contribute to a successful outcome.

Needless to say, implementing the app involves some effort. However, the amount of effort required is not that much and it truly goes a long way in the right direction.

**Nicole Kretz and Dr Florian Kretz** are Managing Directors, Precise Vision Augenärzte, Headquarter Rheine, Germany. They are paid consultants to Carl Zeiss Meditec.



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