



# Vision Source® TRUSTED COLLEAGUE

## Thomas Truitt, OD

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### Shift in Schedule Creates New Opportunities

Expanding your facility is a proven – but expensive – way to accommodate more patients. But the 4-OD, Vision Source® practice of Truitt & Truitt in Marysville, Ohio, chose another route. They expanded their office hours, moving doctors and staff to 12-hour shifts. Now the practice is open from 7:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. On Fridays, the practice is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.; it's open Saturday mornings as well. Instead of working 5 days a week, each of the doctors work 3 days. The practice anticipates adding a fifth doctor soon, says Thomas Truitt, OD.

Here's how the practice works. Each day 2 or 3 ODs work, allowing the 6 exam lanes to run at maximum efficiency. A remodel of the existing space resulted in a larger optical area and a larger pre-test room. Most of the 16 staff members have made the switch to a 12-hour schedule, although there are some administrative staff members who work daily 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. "Our staff seems to like it. Even employees with young children prefer it because they can schedule their children's doctor's appointments or sign up to volunteer in schools during the week," Dr. Truitt says.

The practice felt an urgency to make some changes because 97 percent of its patients are covered by managed vision insurance. "Our biggest challenge has been how to accommodate enough people and be efficient enough to remain profitable while still providing the quality of care that we believe in," he says. However, expanding hours is only a practical solution if the practice has the patient volume to justify it. So the practice made a few other changes

**Preappointing:** "We found preappointing to be a big plus," says Dr. Truitt. "Most managed vision plans have an allowance for an annual eye exam, so if patients are eligible we want to remind them to maximize their plan. Now, rather than having patients come in every 16 or 17 months, they tend to come back about every 12 months," he says. This shift is an example of being willing to make adjustments in a practice. "We actually tried preappointing about 5 years ago, but it met a lot of resistance. Then we tried again about 3 years ago, and we were able to show the staff that the patients appreciated it. Now we preappoint between 65 percent and 70 percent of our patients," Dr. Truitt says. Using Demandforce to be able to e-mail or text patient reminders about their exam times has helped, as well. "That has freed up a lot of staff time."

**Lab upgrades:** By upgrading their in-house lab with a new edger, the practice is able to save on its costs – even for patients whose managed vision plans require that the initial pair of eyeglasses be made in an outside lab. "We can keep any subsequent pairs in-house, and that maximizes our profitability," he says.

**Add medical services:** The practice added an OCT to complement its Optos and visual field technology. "We're now able to manage and treat more patients who would have been referred in the past," Dr. Truitt says.

**Staffing realignment:** The practice moved to team managers instead of 1 overall office manager. The optical manager, for example, oversees the dispensary while the front desk manager handles everything pertaining to the pretesters and front office

### Facing the Future

Dr. Truitt says that in addition to the value his Vision Source® membership has brought him, he's also looking forward to what's still to come. "Vision Source® leadership is on top of what's coming down the pike, in terms of accountable care organizations and where health care is going. It's important for us to be properly positioned for the future." He adds that he appreciates the stewardship of his administrator, Ken Boltz, OD.



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staff. These team managers can quickly confer with 1 of the doctors if needed, and decisions or corrections are made much more rapidly than they were when 1 office manager had "to hover over all the managerial duties," he says. The team manager has a better grasp on what's going on in that department and has ideas on how to improve it. The doctors meet with team managers once a month and with the entire staff weekly. "It's time away from patient time, but it is valuable. We include staff in our decision-making, and the weekly staff meetings keep us in tune with what they're facing and how they handle things," he says.

Dr. Truitt says his years with Vision Source® have provided multiple benefits, too. "Our membership has certainly helped with our bottom line, but the most important part of being in Vision Source® for us has been the ability to share ideas with like-minded individuals who love what they do. In addition, we're thankful to be part of an organization like Vision Source® that is always keeping us a step ahead and protecting our interests."