

Contact lenses are a medical device.

While this statement echoes strong within the optometric community, little information about the depth and complexities of these tiny life-changers seems to resonate with patients. From their intricate design and shape, to the wide variety of material used, contact lenses do not contain a “one-size-fits-all” option. This is especially true when the patients’ eyes are involved. Just as everyone does not wear the same size shoe, contact lenses are hand-picked by trained professionals across the country for each patient based on their specific needs, not only with their prescription, but with their desires concerning maintenance and lifestyle in mind. Without proper education, consumers will inevitably pick a product they feel is most convenient for them. Whether intentionally or not, the misuse of contact lenses has been shown time and time again to result in horrendous outcomes more than just the patients’ vision. Discomfort, poor vision, and even loss of sight represent just a small portion of the ultimate results of picking out contacts without any professional advice or prescription.

Additionally, by extending the length of time required between visits for a new contact lens prescription, patients will lack an incentive to visit their eye health professional. While ideally patients would be motivated by a desire to maintain their personal eye health, one must not be naïve in this business and overestimate the reality of this motivation. By requiring a new prescription every year, patients receive not only the most up-to-date prescription that will provide the best vision possible, but the doctor receives the opportunity to check the integrity of the eye. Many eye conditions have the ability to cause serious damage if left untreated and often occur to little or no symptoms.

While told to remain without emotion about this subject, the very notion proves extremely difficult when concerned with this subject. Knowing that large corporations so willingly sacrifice the vision and well-being of patients in order to advance their own success not only lacks a certain amount of responsibility to the consumer, but also shows the amount of ignorance encouraged in order to maintain a certain amount of monetary value. As a current student, I am actively taking my first class about contact lenses. The key word the previous sentence is first. If multiple classes are required for active optometrists to currently be able to correctly identify a patient’s specific requirements and responsibly meet those requirements to the best of their ability, I question the logic behind allowing consumers to make this decision for themselves with such limited knowledge about the inner workings of contact lenses available to them.