

# Eye Care Professional Newsletter

## Q1 2021

### Contents

**Medical Management**

**Optometric Advisory Council**

**2021 Billing and Coding Changes**

**Patient Experience**

**Supply Chain**

**Philanthropy**

**Press Releases**

**New Mentions**

**Monthly Eye Health Observances**

**Professional Development**



## Medical Management

Dear Colleague,

We physicians are stewards of a noble calling.

We trace our roots back to Aesculapius in 350 BCE, then on to Hippocrates and Galen and into the modern era with the work of Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch, Alexander Fleming, Abraham Flexner, William Osler, Jonas Salk, Harvey Cushing and Michael DeBakey. Americans hold physicians, along with the military, in the highest regard.

So for most of us, a career in medicine is a calling and, as such, is both an honor and an obligation. The honor is the trust our patients have in us and the obligation is our commitment that their welfare will always be central to our concern. Trust and obligation thus inform the moral authority of medical practice and a tradition of service, care and compassion that extends back over 2,000 years.

Our commitment to that tradition has been sorely tested by the global pandemic. The past year has resulted in 121 million infections and almost 3 million deaths worldwide. In the United States alone 30 million infections have resulted in 536,000 fatalities. The ongoing threat of mutant strains and the long term disability of chronic COVID infection remain concerns. And yet, we can now see some glimmers of a return to a more normal life. The number of vaccinations climbs daily. President Biden has stated that by May 1, there will be ample supplies for all who wish to be vaccinated. He has encouraged us to plan for July 4<sup>th</sup> festivities with our families and friends.

As we move into a post-Covid era, we face both opportunities and challenges. Telemedicine, remote monitoring, artificial intelligence, gene therapies, monoclonal antibodies and sustained release pharmacokinetics offer great promise in transforming quality, access and convenience for our patients. But there remain substantial challenges. The aspirations for healthcare are almost limitless, yet the ability to pay for it is not. It is the role of managed care to navigate this process always bringing increasing value to our patients and health plan clients.

At Versant Health we are committed to medical policy that is both authoritative and transparent:

**Authoritative:** Our medical policies are created by independent expert clinicians of the Versant Health Medical Policy Council. They are colleagues who have trained at or hold current appointments at leading institutions such as The Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary/Harvard Medical School, The Harkness Eye Institute of Columbia Medical Center, The Wills Eye Hospital, The Wilmer Institute/Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions and The Bascom Palmer Eye Institute.

**Transparent:** All our policies are reviewed annually on a quarterly basis by these independent clinician experts. Additionally, The Medical Policy Council has the authority to review any matter at any time as appropriately dictated by evolving professional standards, practice patterns or new technologies. All policies and their quarterly updates are posted on our Provider Portals for your review. The portals provide an email link for you to send us your comments. What you think matters and we want to hear from you.

Recognizing the increasing complexity of medical practice and the many competing demands on your time and resources, Versant Health is making substantial investment in process and system improvements so that our work together can be both transparent and efficient.



This is my first letter to you since Versant Health joined the MetLife family of companies. MetLife is a Fortune 30 company with over 150 years of service to its clients thru over 46,000 employees worldwide. This will allow us to advance our mission at Versant Health of helping our members enjoy the wonders of site through healthy eyes and vision.

On behalf of our over 35 million beneficiaries, I thank you for your support as we continue to work together for the benefit of our patients.

Yours truly,

Mark Ruchman MD  
Chief Medical Officer, Versant Health

## Optometric Advisory Council

We wanted to form an Optometric Advisory Council to collectively assist the Executive Leadership Team evaluating the performance of particular programs and have the members serve as ambassadors. We needed to gather input from the members' relevant constituencies and provide feedback regarding industry issues and provide their technical expertise. From my previous experience leading advisory boards, I wanted to form a group of individuals that would provide the Versant ELT real-world experiences and act as an independent sounding board.

The Council is comprised of 15 members that are active in all aspects of the industry including education, private practice, group practice, retail practice, consulting, and industry, which has been instrumental to continue enhancing relationships Versant Health has with its providers, and with the rest of OD community.

The Council meetings have a quarterly cadence to stay current with trends, events, and issues that are happening throughout the optometric and ophthalmic community. In addition, there are smaller meetings that may occur between quarterly meetings for more pressing issues that require immediate feedback. Improving industry relations is a dynamic process and the Council has been more than enthusiastic to provide their input.

The relationship with the American Optometric Association and numerous state associations have been tremendously improved regarding communications, especially with OD provider questions and concerns. They have become more proactive and less reactive, which is a fundamental pillar of Versant Health value statement.

We are excited to continue working with you to improve the patient care of Versant's members.  
– Bryan M. Rogoff, OD, MBA, CPHM, FAAO, Industry Relations and Advisory Consultant



## 2021 Billing and Coding Changes

The most significant changes in the E/M CPT codes since 1997 went into effect January 1, 2021. Learning about these changes and how to utilize them to select the appropriate E/M code for your patient visits can have a significant impact on your practice income this year.

ECPs have historically used two sets of codes for their office visits. The 920xx codes and the 992xx codes. Until this year, many doctors felt that meeting the record keeping criteria for the 920xx codes was easier and, for established patients, they actually reimbursed at a higher rate.

All of that changed this year. In a program called “Patients Over Paperwork,” CMS worked with the AMA, which owns the CPT coding system, to ease the 992xx record keeping criteria to qualify for the various code levels so providers could spend more time interacting with patients instead of trying to assure they had enough history and exam elements recorded for an exam to to qualify for a certain 992xx code level.

The result is, for all of the 992xx codes, there only has to be a “medically appropriate history and examination” recorded and the ECP may choose the billing code based either on the level of Medical Decision Making (MDM) or Time the doctor spends, either face to face or non-face to face, caring for the patient on the date of examination. In general, using Time for code selection will result in under coding a visit.

CMS also modified the number of Relative Value Units assigned to the 992xx codes so they now reimburse more for new and established patients than the equivalent 920xx code.

Therefore, it behooves ECPs to learn how to use the new 992xx coding criteria. If they continue to exclusively use the 920xx codes, as many do, they could lose as much as \$30,000 - \$40,000 per doctor per year in practice income.

Some ECPs have expressed concern that billing the 992xx codes more often than previously will subject them to a higher risk of audits. Medicare and other insurers have taken this into account. ECPs have always been able to bill the highest paying code they qualify to use. Do not let unfounded fears of audit keep you from using the appropriate code for your services which allows you to maximize reimbursement especially at a time when reimbursement from insurers has been stagnant for many years.

There are many additional resources available to learn how to use the new coding guidelines. CMS and AMA have several guides at their respective websites. There are also many webinars available from various sources to educate ECPs and their billing staffs. – Dr. Thomas Cheezum OD, CPC, COPC, Optometric Advisory Council Member

## Patient Experience

### Member Appointment Availability

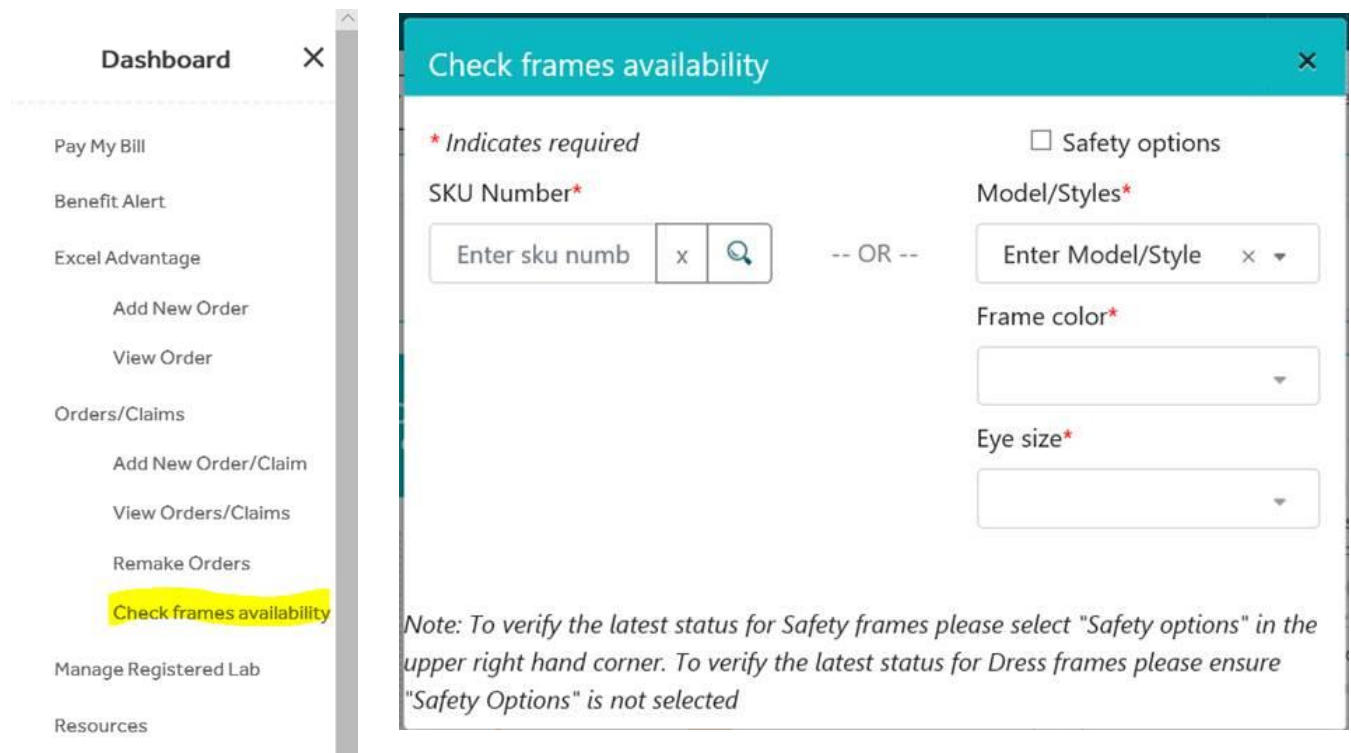
Your patient's experience is vital in practice growth. Appointment availability is the first point of entry for your patients and can help influence their perception of your practice. As a reminder, appointments should be available within two (2) weeks of a member's request. Referral is never required from a member to schedule a routine eye exam appointment. For urgent or emergent care, patient expectation for appointments is within one day of the request (i.e. same day or next) or on the day of the request, respectfully.

When a patient is in-office waiting for their appointment, waiting time is another opportunity to influence a patient's experience. Continue to check in with your patients waiting and set expectations for them if you have unplanned clinic situations. Patients always want to be in the know and will appreciate your willingness to respect their time. – Quality Team, Vision Health Services

### ECP Best Practice/Quick Tip

*Did you know?*

Versant Health has a [provider portal](#) enhancement that allows you to check frame availability prior to placing an order.



**Dashboard** X

- Pay My Bill
- Benefit Alert
- Excel Advantage
  - Add New Order
  - View Order
- Orders/Claims
  - Add New Order/Claim
  - View Orders/Claims
  - Remake Orders
  - Check frames availability**
- Manage Registered Lab
- Resources

**Check frames availability** X

*\* Indicates required*

SKU Number\*

Enter sku numb x 🔍 -- OR -- Enter Model/Style x ▼

Model/Styles\*

Frame color\*

Eye size\*

Safety options

*Note: To verify the latest status for Safety frames please select "Safety options" in the upper right hand corner. To verify the latest status for Dress frames please ensure "Safety Options" is not selected*



We feel confident that this will help increase efficiencies within your practices and enhance the patient experience.

## Supply Chain

We know your patients are always looking for a more robust frame selection.

We are excited to announce supplemental frames to all of our Medicaid EDP providers. This will be sent out to supplement your existing 48-piece Medicaid kit. The additional frames include 3 SKUs with a larger eye size of 58-60mm. Plan on receiving your supplemental tray in June. Included in the supplemental tray will be a details that lists SKUs to be removed from your current Medicaid kit.

**Here's** a look at the additions.

We are thrilled to serve our members through you by providing an enhanced eyewear experience.

– Supply Chain Management

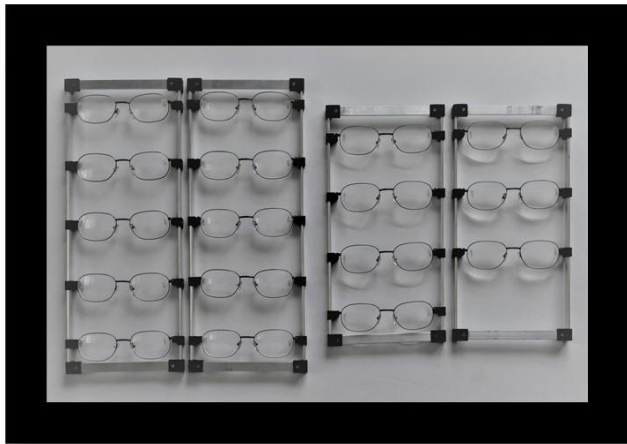


## Philanthropy

### **Eyeglasses donation made by Versant Health lab to impact the country of Papua New Guinea**

In partnership with a local charity, called Great Faith Vision, our Versant Health lab in Philadelphia recently manufactured eyeglasses for lens ladders donated to the Nazarene hospital in Kujib, Papua New Guinea. Equipping Nazarene Hospital with this equipment will enable them to help approximately 80% of the patients they examine through visual acuity tests.

Pictured below are the lens ladders and glasses made through the Versant Health lab's donation.



"On behalf of Great Faith Vision and the Nazarene Hospital at Kujib, Papua New Guinea, thank you for your partnership and generosity," said John Elcock, President of Great Faith Vision. "While Versant Health's contribution might appear small by USA standards, it is of inestimable value to the tens of thousands who will be helped by this tool."

## Press Releases

### **James Reid Takes Helm as CEO of Versant Health | April 1, 2021**

In January 2021, MetLife announced the completion of the Versant Health acquisition and appointment of Reid as CEO. James will replace Kirk Rothrock, who is retiring after serving as Versant Health's CEO since March 2013.

Read more [here](#).

### **Americans Show New Interest in Virtual Eye Care Options, Finds Second Annual Vision Wellness Study | February 11, 2021**

Versant Health, released the results of the 2nd annual Vision Wellness Study, which found Americans, in particular young adults under 40, are showing a new interest in the use of virtual technology and telemedicine for eye care.

The Vision Wellness Study surveyed consumers and health plan executives on their perceptions of eye care in a pandemic environment, including the value they place on eye care services and their beliefs about the impact of eye care on overall health. Read more [here](#).



## New Mentions



### **Vision Care Is Key in Detecting Underlying Health Issues, Minimizing Future Health Care Expenses | 03/19/2021**

Versant Health's Dr. Mark Ruchman discusses how preventative eye care is critically important to detecting not only eye disease, but other potential chronic issues – which leads to better management of health care expenses. Listen to the podcast [here](#).







### **Telehealth Eye Care Entry May Improve Affected Person Engagement | 02/16/2021**

Young adults are showing renewed interest in access to telemedical eye care. Almost three in four respondents (74 percent) under 40 said that having access to telemedicine would make them more likely to plan a routine eye exam, compared with 67% of all respondents. Read more [here](#).



### **Growth of Telemedicine Also Shaping Consumer Attitudes Toward Vision Care | 02/15/2021**

More than one-third of people under 40 say that being able to communicate remotely would have a high impact on seeing an eye doctor more often. Read more [here](#).



### **Americans Show New Interest in Virtual Eye Care Options | 02/12/2021**

Young adults, in particular, are more likely to seek out and place high value on telemedicine for eye care and those in vulnerable populations are benefitting most, according to an annual vision wellness study by Versant Health. Read more [here](#).



## Special Offers

Through June 30, 2021, Versant Health, in partnership with Essilor, is excited to share with you a direct-to-member offer to help drive members to your practice! Versant is partnering with a select group of employers to share this offer directly with their employees.

As a partner in our Independent EDP lab network, select Davis Vision or Superior Vision patients are eligible for a limited-time to receive a \$50 reward card when they purchase a qualifying Luxottica brand frame with Essilor lenses\*.

This is a great opportunity for your patients to choose from a broader choice of lens selections and for you to prescribe the highest quality lens products to best meet your patients' visual needs.

- Easy to use! This offer is completely member-driven. There are NO actions required by you as their eyecare provider.
- Limited-time Offer: March 1, 2021 – June 30, 2021.
- \*Qualifying lenses include: Varilux<sup>®</sup> Progressive Lenses with a Crizal<sup>®</sup> No-Glare Treatment OR Eyezen<sup>®</sup> Single Vision Lenses with a Crizal<sup>®</sup> No-Glare Treatment.
- Participating Luxottica brand frames include: Ray-Ban, Oakley, Costa, Vogue, Arnette, Polo, Ralph Lauren, Michael Kors, Coach, Brooks Brothers, Armani Exchange, Emporio Armani, Burberry, Versace, Prada Eyewear, Prada Linea Rossa, Tiffany & Co., Dolce & Gabbana, Miu Miu Eyewear, Valentino, Giorgio Armani, and Bvlgari.
- Please visit [this site](#) for more information.



## Events

### Women's Leadership Summit presented by Versant Health

Held in conjunction with an official LPGA event, the Gainbridge LPGA, The Women's Leadership Summit was a half-day virtual conference, featuring experienced leaders from cross-functional industries discussing how advocacy and mentorship have been beneficial throughout their careers and personal lives.

In case you missed it, you can now watch the second annual Women's Leadership Summit with top female leaders from a variety of industries, including featured speaker Hannah Storm, ESPN SportsCenter anchor. [Listen](#) as these inspirational women discuss how they've found advocacy and mentorship beneficial throughout their careers and personal lives.

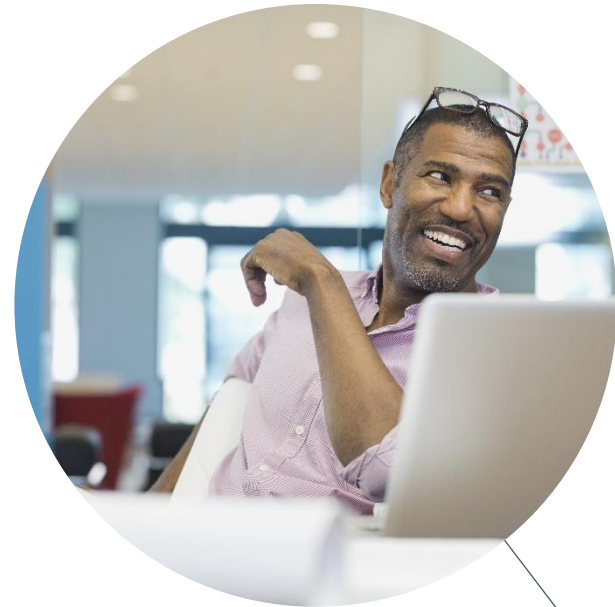
## Monthly Eye Health Observances

### National AMD/Low Vision Awareness Month

February was National AMD/Low Vision Awareness Month. AMD, or Age-Related Macular Degeneration, is the leading cause of vision loss, affecting over 15 million adults over the age of 60. Low vision is a visual impairment that cannot be corrected by standard eyeglasses, contact lenses, medication, or surgery. Having low vision can make activities like reading, shopping, cooking, writing, and watching TV hard to do. For more information about low vision awareness, click [here](#).

### Workplace Eye Wellness Month

In honor of March's Workplace Eye Wellness Month, here are a few [tips](#) to educate patients about ways to prevent digital eye strain and workplace-related eye injuries.



## Professional Development

### Resilience in times of uncertainty

Our ability to recover, learn, and grow from challenging experiences is defined as "resilience." Building up our resilience is especially important during times of prolonged uncertainty. According to Harvard, resilience has been shown to "positively influence work satisfaction and engagement, as well as overall well-being." To learn more, read this [free article](#) by Harvard Business Review.