

12 Ways to Turn an AMD Diagnosis into News That's Worth Celebrating

A guide for eye care professionals treating patients with age-related macular degeneration (AMD)

Preserving Vision — and Feelings

With the latest developments in diagnosing and treating AMD, eye care professionals are tremendously fortunate to be able to help patients preserve vision and avoid the harsh realities that can come with this chronic, progressive disease. The ability to recognize disease in its earliest stages and monitor it more carefully is a testament to how far technology has come. But there is more to being a good doctor than science alone can provide. Good communication skills can set you apart as a practitioner and have a major impact on patients' lives.



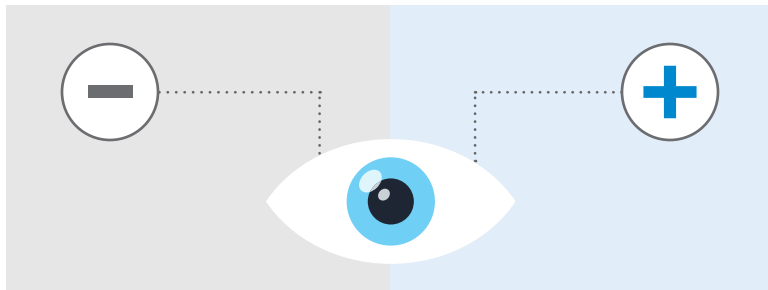
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Perception Is Everything

Let's be real: delivering bad news is no fun. However, bad news is subjective. As doctors, we know that catching disease early leads to better outcomes. But, from the patient's point of view, finding out that you need to battle a serious condition for the rest of your life is a hard pill to swallow—no matter how desperately we try to sugarcoat it.

Diseases like AMD require patients to take personal responsibility if they wish to avoid consequences, including vision loss. That being said, we have the power to shape our patients' perceptions of their diagnoses. When we tell a patient she has AMD, that patient can walk away from the conversation feeling either hopeless or empowered. Everyone benefits when the patient recognizes the good in an early AMD diagnosis. After all, when a patient remains in the dark, no choice is available to her and the disease wields all the power.

No one wants to be a powerless victim of a chronic disease. From this perspective, knowing that you have AMD before it has a chance to diminish your quality of life is actually some of the best news ever. But it is up to the doctor to help their patients perceive it in this way.



The Reality of Delivering a Life-changing Diagnosis

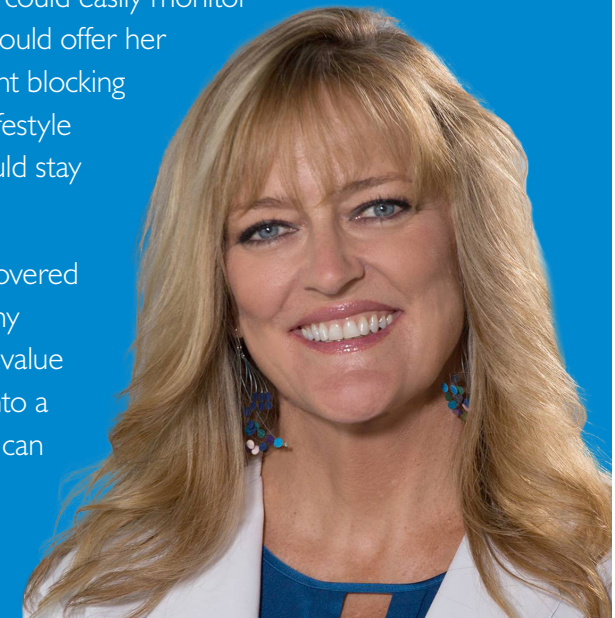
BY LAURIE SORRENSEN, OD, FAAO

I'll be the first to admit that when we had our AdaptDx[®] installed in February 2016, all I was thinking about was how this technology was going to improve my ability to care for a growing AMD population. It hadn't occurred to me that it would force me to deliver life-changing diagnoses much more frequently than I was used to. As a result, the first time I delivered an early AMD diagnosis, it did not go well. In fact, had I not learned from the mistakes I made that first day, my unit would be sitting in a corner right now, collecting dust.

Perhaps I was a little too eager to see my AdaptDx in action because the first time I diagnosed a patient, the message did not come across the way I wanted it to. I walked into the room and flatly informed my patient that she had AMD. I did not sound upbeat. On the contrary, my tone conveyed that this, indeed, was bad news.

In this first case, the patient had absolutely no drusen. It was very early stage, subclinical AMD. In other words, there was so much hope for this patient. We could easily monitor her more regularly. We could offer her supplements and blue-light blocking lenses. She could make lifestyle changes. In short, we could stay on top of this.

Fortunately, I quickly discovered the secret to translating my own appreciation for the value of early AMD diagnosis into a dialogue that my patients can likewise appreciate.



12 Steps to Improve Your Delivery

Delivery can make a significant difference in how a patient perceives your message and on how he acts on it. Good news can easily be misinterpreted as bad news, possibly resulting in less favorable outcomes. Here are some simple steps that you can take to help patients see the silver lining and move in a positive direction:



1. Walk in prepared.

Don't just wing it. Have an organized message and plan before you walk in the room. Create and use a prepared worksheet and circle items as you discuss them.



2. Deliver the information clearly.

Sit alongside your patient—not across from him. Be very matter-of-fact when delivering the details of the testing and diagnosis.



3. Use language that the patient can understand.

When sharing the diagnosis, it may not be particularly useful to initiate a long discussion of the different stages of AMD and how and why it progresses. What the patient needs to understand at this point is that your test helped detect a disease that many patients don't know they have until it's much too late. Let the patient know that this is great news. If the patient currently has no other signs of AMD, consider saying, "You have no other clinical signs of AMD, which is great news and means we can slow the process down and probably maintain good vision the rest of your life."



4. Avoid medical/scientific jargon.

Don't explain all of the science behind dark adaptation and AMD. Keep it simple. Explain that this test reveals the very first signs and can help you recognize or delay the development of additional signs of disease down the road.

12 Steps to Improve Your Delivery (continued)



5. Don't apologize.

An apology implies that there's a reason to feel sad. There's not. An early AMD diagnosis puts you and the patient in the position of power.



6. Respect the patient's reaction.

It's very possible that the patient will feel sad, scared or discouraged. Don't dismiss this or make the patient believe that you think such a response is ridiculous or unwarranted. You can be upbeat while, at the same time, demonstrating empathy and respect.



7. Make sure the patient understands.

If it seems like the patient is confused about the news you've delivered, don't simply ask if they understand and accept "yes" as an answer. Ask them to describe what they think they heard in their own words so you can clear up any areas of misunderstanding.



8. Establish a plan.

Try not to let the gravity of AMD overshadow the hope that you can offer. Present the options and focus on how to move forward. It's much easier for patients to accept a diagnosis if you have a clear plan for how to address it. You can work on this together.

Learn how the AdaptDx can help you:

Detect AMD earlier

Subclinical AMD impairs dark adaptation at least three years before it is clinically evident.¹

Preserve patient vision

Once AMD is detected, you can initiate preventive therapies and monitor progression to ensure prompt referral before vision loss.

Increase practice revenue

Dark adaptation testing is reimbursable (CPT 92284) and can drive additional revenue from patients diagnosed with early AMD, based on more frequent office visits, additional diagnostic testing, and sales of nutritional supplements and protective eyewear.



AdaptDx[®]

Easy to Use • Easy to Interpret • Reimbursable

Visit www.maculogix.com to learn more.

¹Owsley, C et al. Ophthalmology. 2016;123(2):344-351

12 Steps to Improve Your Delivery (continued)



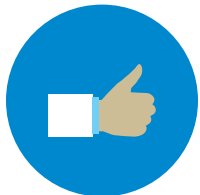
9. Make time to respond to your patient's concerns.

Never let a patient leave your office with a sense of hopelessness.



10. Encourage questions.

Patients will often think of a thousand things they should have asked, but don't let it be your fault that they didn't.



11. Offer validation and encouragement.

Don't dismiss a patient's feelings or reaction. Everyone is entitled to their own feelings. You should, however, help direct these emotions in a positive direction.



12. Provide take-home information.

Provide handouts, pamphlets, and website addresses, but make sure to warn the patient about ominous details that relate to other, more severe forms of disease.



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MacuLogix, Inc. is an innovator in the early detection and tracking of age-related macular degeneration (AMD). The company's AdaptDx[®] dark adaptometer is the first practical device for detecting AMD at least three years earlier than other technologies. The AdaptDx is an easy-to-use functional test that enables doctors to detect AMD and monitor its progression in order to preserve vision with proactive intervention.

