Ophthalmologist Prefers Anatomical Models to Educate Patients

James A. Katz, M.D. is an ophthalmologist who sees about 150 patients each week. Surgeries he routinely performs include cataracts, refractive surgery like LASIK, and corneal transplants. He discussed the types of learning tools he uses to educate his patients about diseases and procedures.

Dr. Katz uses a variety of learning tools to educate his patients about diseases and procedures, including handouts, information on the practice’s website, videos and models of the eye. “Models of the eye make it easy for patients to understand the procedure or the disease,” he noted. “A model is a three-dimensional structure, and the eye is a three-dimensional structure. We have the ability to point to something, to hold something and to explain in a short period of time what is going on, which is not possible in two dimensions. There are no words on the models, which allows us to focus in on what’s most important and to leave out the meaningless parts of the disease or procedure. It results in a better understanding for the patient.”

How the Model is Used

The practice has developed different ways of educating the patients, which vary with the procedure the patient is having. “For refractive surgery,” Dr. Katz explained, “there is a surgical coordinator who uses video and handouts. When I meet with the patients, I use the eye model to discuss what is going to happen. I show what’s being altered and what changes will take place to the eye. I use the model with about 20 to 25 patients each week. The information may vary slightly for different patients, depending on what they’re going to have done and how much information they want, and according to their age, education, level of knowledge and attitude. With the eye model, we can go into depth about the disease process and the procedure. I feel that the patient understands the disease and treatment or procedure better when I use the model to explain.”

Longevity of the Model

The three-dimensional anatomical models of the eye that Dr. Katz uses are manufactured by GPI Anatomicals. “I’ve had the GPI one about three years,” he said, “and it’s like new. There isn’t any printing to rub off. The models are educational devices, and I’ll keep them as long as I have all the parts or as long as they’re still relevant.”

Dr. Katz uses two models. Both are full eye globe or eyeball structures. One emphasizes cataracts, and the other, corneas. While they are not being used, the models are always displayed in the examination rooms. “The cataract model stays in the room that all cataract patients are going to,” clarifies Dr. Katz.