

# Optimizing the Referring Doctor Experience



## Case Study: Investing in Engagement Strategy

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“ We knew we needed to invest time and effort in our referring doctor experience. We implemented the Referral Portal to enhance the relationship with our referring doctors and improve coordination of care.

*Referral Portal helps our practice advance patient engagement, expand connectivity and automate referral reporting. ”*

**Samir Melki, MD, PhD, Boston Eye Group**  
Founder & Medical Director

## Executive Summary

Now more than ever, medical practices must perform at an increasing level of engagement, not only with patients but also with improved coordination within the referring doctor network. An indicator of practice performance is its ability to provide visibility throughout the referral process in order to reach a higher level of coordinated care and close the referral loop on patient consultations more efficiently. To stay competitive in the local marketplace, it is important for eye care practices to manage referring doctor relationships as strategically as the acquisition of new patients.

Boston Eye Group’s investment in Sophrona’s Referral Portal is laying the groundwork toward an enhanced experience for referring doctors and their patients.

## Background

For more than 15 years, Boston Eye Group has paved the way as a world-renowned institution in eye care research. Through its work in improving access to cataract surgery in the U.K. and performing artificial cornea implantation in the Middle East, Boston Eye Group stands at the forefront of innovative surgical technologies. The company's philosophy is that the best medical care is delivered "only through dedicated emphasis on both scientific pursuit and patient satisfaction." Founder and Medical Director, Dr. Samir Melki, saw an opportunity to deliver on that philosophy with the adoption of Sophrona's Referral Portal.

## Challenges

One of the biggest challenges that medical practices face with patient referrals is lack of integration between providers and inconsistent transfer of information. For example, when a diabetic patient is referred to an eye doctor, recommended treatment and communication of findings is an important measure of coordinated care. Yet, because the majority of referrals are sent via fax or phone call, or patients are asked to schedule specialist appointments on their own, non-compliance is often the result.

According to a report from ABC News, it is estimated that 20 to 40 percent of patients do not schedule their referral appointment<sup>1</sup>. The study noted, "Patients who left the office with an appointment were more likely to attend." If patient referrals are the relationship-building link between doctors, a more efficient communication process is needed to increase kept appointments.

At Boston Eye Group, scheduling conflicts were uncovered with referring doctors who entrusted patients to schedule their own appointments. As a result, the referring doctor did not know if the patient scheduled or

if the appointment was kept. Furthermore, if a patient scheduled an appointment without saying they were referred, no transfer of information was shared between providers. Process improvement changes were necessary to streamline communication with referring doctors and provide a better coordinated care experience for referred patients.

## Solution

Investing in technology is a large undertaking for any organization, particularly when technology requires changing routine behavior. To refine efficiency, Boston Eye Group partnered with Sophrona to make improvements in the referral process. The Referral Portal offered several key benefits.

Replacing inefficient communication with the Referral Portal's universal web interface alleviated lost faxes and back and forth phone calls. With real-time access to Boston Eye Group's schedule, referring doctors now make appointments before their patient leaves the office, leading to an increase in kept appointments.

Referral Portal is MIPS friendly, allowing the referring doctor to see when the appointment is kept and exchange secure messaging or chart notes throughout the referral process. Reporting is sent back to the referring doctor and the referral feedback loop is closed when the patient visit is concluded.

Referral Portal offers a competitive advantage helping Boston Eye Group to strengthen the referral network. Tracking referral data through a robust dashboard provides insight into which doctors are actively referring to the practice. With this information, Boston Eye Group is able to proactively connect and engage their network to increase referrals.

## Referring Doctor Experience

From the referring doctor point of view, Referral Portal has helped remedy old challenges and put time back into their schedule. Dr. Rosanna Lamalva has been collaborating with Boston Eye Group for more than a decade and enjoys the enhanced experience of using the Referral Portal.

“ It’s important to ensure our patients are well informed with the information they need when we send them to another doctor. It takes time to make a phone call to schedule a patient for a consult.

*The Referral Portal solved a long-standing challenge. We now make appointments directly. With a few clicks, I’m able to send comments or other notes to the doctor, and we receive a completed consultation note to close the referral loop. I just wish we had started this earlier. ”*

**Rosanna Lamalva, OD, EyeBar Boston**

## Competitive Advantage

Partnering with Sophrona has helped Boston Eye Group gain an important advantage, identifying and addressing gaps in the referral process.

Appointment confirmations, secure messaging between doctors, and outcome reporting not only provide increased visibility and enhanced collaboration, but also help with MIPS Improvement Activities related to better referral management.

These features have made Boston Eye Group more attractive to referring doctors and positions them to gain a higher percentage of new patient referrals.

“ Boston Eye Group now has a distinct competitive advantage to compete for and win new business from referring doctors and larger healthcare organizations. Referral Portal allows our team to deliver a higher standard of care, providing visibility throughout the process, increased communication, and the follow up reporting that our referring practices need. ”

**Arthur A. Geary, CEO, Boston Eye Group**

The shared goal for Boston Eye Group and its referring doctors is to provide a higher standard of coordinated care, as well as feedback for every referral that is sent.

## Conclusion

Referral Portal is helping Boston Eye Group to develop a more efficient referral process by reducing back and forth phone calls and streamlining clinic workflow. Referred patients leave the referring doctor’s office with an appointment in hand. Referring doctors enjoy being able to deliver an enhanced patient experience. In addition, referring doctors appreciate the convenience of exchanging secure messaging, and the ability to track patient progress 24/7 through the Referral Portal. Providing these benefits has strengthened Boston Eye Group’s relationship with their referring doctor network and opened the door to increased referrals. No longer worried about lost referrals, Boston Eye Group is focused on continued growth.

[Sophrona works with thousands of doctors nationwide, processing millions of patient-doctor communications every year. After more than a decade, Sophrona sets the standard and continues to deliver innovative solutions uniquely designed for ophthalmology. To learn more about the Referral Portal, or to schedule a demonstration, please contact our team or visit \[sophrona.com\]\(http://sophrona.com\).](#)