

# Growing Referrals by Reducing Referral Time



## Case Study: Saving Time with Efficient Technology

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“ We were fielding increasing complaints about the wait time involved with our referral process, but we needed a sufficient increase in volume to make room for an additional scheduler and justify the cost of hiring a full-time employee.

Sophrona's Referral Portal bridged the gap. Now, our referring doctors schedule appointments while their patient is still in the office, which saves everyone time. ”

**Gretchen Kimble, Mississippi Vision**  
Practice Administrator

## Executive Summary

Referrals are on the rise. More than three million Americans undergo cataract surgery each year. The combination of aging Baby Boomers and numerous options for premium technology are driving more cataract referrals than ever before. The 2019 IOL Market Report predicts the premium IOL market will grow more than 10% in revenue this year.<sup>1</sup>

### Is your practice prepared to handle more referrals?

Despite increasing EMR use, the referral process continues to break down in a number of ways. While practices have adopted their own technology, barriers between systems prevent efficient communication. Ambiguous information for the patient to schedule an appointment on their own often results in non-compliance. Practices struggle with an inability to reach the referred patient to get them scheduled.

In order to increase referrals and reduce referral time, Mississippi Vision invested in Sophrona's Referral Portal. Enhanced capabilities and real-time scheduling now provide a better experience for referring doctors and their patients.

## Background

More than 45 years of combined experience among its surgeons has established Mississippi Vision Correction Center as the premier partner for advanced cataract and refractive correction procedures in the Jackson Metro Area. With a mission to provide the best in eye care to every patient, synergy between the practice and its referring doctors is evident in the long-standing relationship between providers.

## Challenges

Located just outside of Jackson, referred patients often travel from within a 150-mile radius. To meet the needs of those traveling to the practice, Mississippi Vision offers same day evaluations and surgery options to referring doctors. Patients are referred to the clinic, evaluated for the first time, and receive eye surgery later that day. While same day scheduling is convenient for patients, challenges with the referral process created time strains for staff.

Like many practices, Mississippi Vision has dedicated team members who handle scheduling of evaluations and same day surgeries. While schedulers work in clinic, they are unable to return messages until the next day. Frustrated by wait time, referring optometrists expressed concerns.

“I had been dealing for the last year and a half with increasing complaints from our OD referral base. The main complaint was waiting too long for call backs from our practice,” recalls Gretchen Kimble, Practice Administrator. “I knew Sophrona as a leader in Patient Portal technology and wanted to learn more about their Referral Portal.”

## Solution

Providing a higher standard of coordinated care is a shared goal for Mississippi Vision and its referring doctors. Because patients are more likely to follow through when they leave with an appointment in hand, the team partnered with Sophrona to create a new referral process. Procedure changes were necessary to streamline scheduling and improve communication of patient referrals.

The Referral Portal offers several key benefits.

**Alleviate referring doctor wait time through Real-Time Scheduling.** Referring doctors no longer have to pick up the phone or wait for a call back. With the ability to exchange information through the Referral Portal, real-time access to Mississippi Vision’s schedule means appointments are made before patients leave the office.

**Reduce staff time spent returning calls and save cost of hiring an additional FTE.** “Before, the volume of calls was overwhelming and we needed another person,” explains Ashley, Surgical Coordinator. “Now, our referring doctors love using the Referral Portal. We benefit 110% from having it because it streamlines everything for referring doctors, patients and our practice.”

**Exchange information securely through the Referral Portal’s inter-operable web interface.** Referring doctors are able to schedule and verify the status of appointments. The Referral Portal also has the ability to exchange secure messaging throughout the referral process, and send reports back to the doctor electronically to close the loop.

## Conclusion

Referral Portal is helping Mississippi Vision develop an efficient, MIPS friendly referral process. After testing with a small group of referring providers the first few months, **every doctor had referred patients through the Referral Portal. Mississippi Vision received referrals daily averaging more than 60 per month and over 300 within a four month period.** Over the next six months, the practice shared three important goals:

- 1) Expand usage to a larger percentage of its referral base.
- 2) Increase the appointment types being offered.
- 3) Utilize more of the Referral Portal’s robust tools to continually enhance the referral process.

To learn more about how [Sophrona can help your practice grow referrals by reducing referral time](#), contact our team.