

# Maximizing Clinical Efficiency



**LAUREL**  
EYE CLINIC

## Combating Cataract Cuts through Online Referrals

[LaurelEye.com](http://LaurelEye.com)

[Sophrona.com](http://Sophrona.com)

“Our continued goal at Laurel Eye Clinic is to always offer the latest innovations and techniques. The Referral Portal really allowed us to offer new technology to our referral base and set ourselves apart from the competition. **With the looming cataract cut, it's even more important to get new doctors up to speed. Sophrona's Referral Portal helps our practice ramp up new doctors faster.** Our referral base loves being able to schedule appointments before patients leave the office, particularly on evenings and Saturdays. It's user friendly and helps tie the loop between their practice and ours.”

**Lisa Shaw, Laurel Eye Clinic**  
COE / Administrator

## Executive Summary

2020 is the decade the eye care industry has been waiting for — quite literally, this is the year of perfect vision. It is also the continuation of reduced physician reimbursement for a variety of procedures and office visit codes from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. The 2020 fee schedule released in July, 2019 proposed a 15% reduction in reimbursement for 66984 (non-complicated cataract surgery) and a 6% reduction for 66982 (complex cataracts). Ophthalmology Management estimates that a surgeon performing 300 cataract surgeries in 2020, with 10% being complex cataracts, equates to approximately \$27,577 in reduced revenue.<sup>1</sup> Although technology, techniques and post-op care have improved over the past several decades, in many cases, the operating expense of performing cataract surgery has increased.

### How is your practice making up lost revenue?

Laurel Eye Clinic called on Sophrona to combat cataract cuts through online referrals and enhanced continuity of care. External referrals come in steadily through Sophrona's Referral Portal allowing the practice to book consults and fill doctor schedules more quickly and more efficiently.

## Background

Since 1973, Laurel Eye Clinic has established its reputation as Pennsylvania's leader in Ophthalmology. A blended team of board-certified ophthalmologists and optometrists provides high-quality patient care and skilled service in routine, medical and surgical eye care. In 2000, Laurel Laser & Surgery Center opened as one of the first privately-owned ambulatory surgery centers in the area. Today, its two ASCs perform thousands of eye surgeries each year. From the simplest personal interaction to the most complex technological procedure, Laurel Eye Clinic remains committed to delivering uncompromised care to every patient.

## Challenges

With eight optometrists and five ophthalmologists, doctor schedules are booked out weeks to months in advance. In a typical year, the practice performs approximately 5,000 cataract surgeries. Planning to hire two new doctors in 2020, and anticipating the reduction in cataract reimbursement, the team placed importance on bringing new doctors up to speed quickly. Laurel Eye wanted to improve the referral process, alleviate back and forth phone calls, and reduce unnecessary time spent by staff, referring doctors, and patients.

## Solution

With a more efficient process in place, booking consults through the Referral Portal allows doctors and surgeons to treat more patients.

**"The Referral Portal helps us ramp up new doctors faster and grow their practice quickly. Referring doctors were used to scheduling two to three months out,"** said Lisa Shaw, Administrator. **"Now, they are able to see the next available appointment, or refer to a new surgeon to cut down on wait time and get patients in sooner."**

Laurel Eye has performed many medical "firsts" in the Pennsylvania area. Thanks to Sophrona's solution, the Referral Portal is not only a competitive advantage—it is another example of continuing to innovate, offering new technology to better serve its referral base.

## Sophrona's Referral Portal offers several key benefits:

### **Increase online referrals and complete treatment faster.**

Historically, referrals were sent via time consuming phone calls; requests received after hours were contacted the next business day. **"The number one comment we receive is that doctors love being able to schedule on evenings and Saturdays,"** said Mark Powell, Marketing Manager. **"Referrals were in a holding pattern. Now, they are scheduled before the patient leaves the office."** Streamlining its referral requests, patients are scheduled in real-time, and moved through the treatment process at Laurel Eye with more ease.

### **Grow practice and referrals quickly for new doctors.**

Delivering integrated care with more transparency is important. External doctors are often concerned about whether they will lose a patient who is referred to a different doctor. It can also be difficult to determine what happens after a patient is referred. As new doctors join Laurel Eye, the Referral Portal provides an efficient way to quickly load their schedule and make open time slots accessible. The onboarding process is faster and more efficient; it provides a smooth transition for doctors joining the organization while promoting due diligence with referring doctors who can view patient status information in a convenient dashboard.

### **Fill the gap in lost revenue from reduced cataract reimbursements.**

Cataract surgery consults make up 95% of the referrals that Laurel Eye receives. The Referral Portal helped the practice establish a proactive plan to increase referrals. Referring doctors can now schedule in real-time when it is convenient for them. As the status of referred patients is communicated in a mutually beneficial way, doctors remain engaged in Laurel Eye's user-friendly process. Leadership can easily track referral activity and corresponding surgeries in its entirety from month to month.

## Conclusion

Laurel Eye Clinic is combating cataract cuts through the integration of online referrals. **A well-planned referral process serves as a compass before, during and after patients are sent to the practice.** With increasing usage of the Referral Portal, the team set a goal to double online referrals in 2020. Contact Sophrona to learn more about referral solutions for your practice.

SOURCE: 1. Ophthalmology Management, The 2020 cataract surgery cuts: What's coming and what can we do? December 1, 2019.