Introduction

Participating in some form of exercise or sporting activities are increasing; more Britons than ever are signing up to get fit by joining a gym. Spectacles can often be a problem when playing sports. This has led to many practitioners prescribing contact lenses for such activities.

Method

A questionnaire was designed to establish the trend in prescribing contact lenses for patients who participate in sports. This simple questionnaire was limited to one side of A4 paper to enable a high response rate. The design of the questionnaire was to ascertain the prescribing trends of optometrists for sports and to establish the most common reasons for patients requesting contact lenses.

The questionnaire was distributed among optometrists at a non-contact lens continuing education and training (CET) meeting, the Sports Vision Diploma course 2005 in London UK and Dublin IRL.

The questionnaire was not validated; however it ascertained some scrutiny and amendment by other qualified optometrists. The anonymous questionnaires were analysed.

Results

A total of 20 questionnaires were collected.

Profile of Optometrists

Age and Gender: The average age of recipients was 38.9 ±6.5 years. The minimum age was 29 years and the maximum age was 56.

Male and Females: The ratio was 2:1 (65% males).

Years in Practice: The average years in practice of the optometrists who completed
the questionnaire was 15.9 ±7.4 years. The minimum was 3 years and the maximum year was 27.

Optometrists who Fit Contact Lenses: 100% of the optometrists in this study fitted contact lenses of which 40% (8) are on the College of Optometrists voluntary contact lens list.

The 3 main reasons for patients requesting contact lenses

- 75% (15) said patients required them for cosmetics
- 75% (15) said patients required them for sports
- 100% (20) said patients required them because of the inconvenience of spectacles.

Fitting modalities within an average week

- 100% (20) fit daily disposable soft contact lenses each week
- 85% (17) fit monthly disposable soft contact lenses each week
- 15% (3) fit conventional soft contact lenses each week

First Choice lens for various sports

Swimming:
- 70% (14) recommend daily disposable soft contact lenses
- 25% (5) do not fit contact lenses for swimming.

Gym:
- 60% (12) use dailies
- 20% (4) fit monthly disposable soft contact lenses

Outdoor Sports and Racquet Sports:
- 60% (12) fit dailies

Boxing:
- 50% (10) use dailies
- 10% (2) fit a monthly soft disposable and extended wear soft contact lens

Skiing:
- 55% (11) fit daily soft disposable contact lenses
- 25% (5) use extended wear soft monthly disposable contact lenses
Discussion

Sporting activities appear to be one of the top three main reasons why patients require contact lenses in this study.

Over 50% of optometrist chose daily disposables as their first choice contact lens for all the sports indicated in this study (100% of optometrists fit daily disposable contact lenses within an average week), this possibly is due to the convenience to patients and if the contact lens gets dirty during play it can be disposed of immediately.

25% of optometrist do not fit contact lenses for swimming, one would postulate that it is possibly due to the risk of punctuate keratitis, acanthamoeba, and lenses falling out.

It appears yearly (conventional) replacement lenses for sports are obsolete as the first choice lens.

Skiing is participated at high altitudes thus a more hypoxic condition. For this reason skiing had the highest percentage of extended wear (SiH) lenses of all the sports (25%).

It is important to note that monthly replacement lenses can include SiH daily use.

As expected RGP lenses were not indicated in any contact sports for example racket sports and boxing.

Although only a small number of optometrist were questioned for this study, it clearly shows more investigation is needed into the use of contact lenses in sports, as sports is a primary reason patients require contact lenses.

References:
2: Contact lens for athletes, Donald R Weis,