

# COMMUNICATION, TROUBLESHOOTING ARE KEY SKILLS FOR DISPENSERS



## DISPENSER DETAILS

**Name:** David Sofatzis

**Position:** Practice manager & optical dispenser

**Location:** Lumiere Eyecare, Wentworth Point, NSW

**Years in industry:** 4

### 1. What inspired you to pursue an optical dispensing career, and how has your perspective changed over time?

I was drawn to optical dispensing because it uniquely combines clinical health care, sales, and hands-on tasks like frame repairs and adjustments. It allows me to make a tangible difference in people's lives by providing tailored optical solutions that improve their vision and confidence. Earning my Certificate IV in Optical Dispensing from ACOD in 2023 gave me the theoretical knowledge and practical skills to recommend eyewear and dispense advanced optical lenses based on each individual's unique anatomy, needs, lifestyle and habits. Over the past four years, I've also come to appreciate the flexibility within the optics field. From managing a practice to exploring opportunities with lens labs, frame sales, or equipment companies, the career paths are diverse. Training new staff has boosted my confidence and solidified my expertise, enabling me to pass on my knowledge to others.

### 2. What are the most influential moments and people that led you to this point?

The dedicated Lumiere Eyecare team who mentored me early in my career and the support I received from ACOD during my studies were instrumental in developing my skills and confidence. I'm especially grateful to my family and friends, who have consistently motivated and encouraged me throughout this journey.

### 3. What's something you know now that you wish you understood at the start of your career?

One important lesson I've learned is the value of taking your time during a dispense. Rushing can lead to mistakes, but careful attention to detail ensures the best outcomes for both patients and the practice. Patients appreciate attention to

detail, and many are happy to wait if they see you are providing expert care.

### 4. Can you share a moment where you made a significant impact on a patient's life?

There have been many instances where patients have shared that the glasses I dispensed were the "best" they've ever had. This feedback is incredibly rewarding and reaffirms the importance of accurate dispensing measurements and tailoring solutions to individual needs. For example, I've helped patients struggling with progressive lenses by ensuring accurate fitting and providing detailed explanations. Seeing them regain confidence and comfort in their vision is one of the most fulfilling aspects of my work.

### 5. What innovations in eyewear or technology are you most excited about, and why?

I'm particularly excited about advancements in myopia control, as these solutions help slow its progression while providing clear vision. Ortho-k lenses are a standout innovation; they not only manage myopia but also offer patients the freedom to go without glasses during the day, which is especially beneficial for sports or personal preferences. I'm also inspired by the evolution of progressive lens designs. Utilising biometric technology, we can now customise lenses to an individual's eye model, offering improved adaptation, wider fields of view, enhanced night vision, and reduction in higher-order aberrations. These innovations significantly improve patient outcomes and satisfaction.

### 6. What skills or qualities do you believe are most important for an optical dispenser to thrive in today's market?

An optical dispenser must excel at troubleshooting, as this ensures patient concerns are resolved effectively. Communication is another vital skill – explaining product options clearly builds trust and confidence in the optical product being offered. Qualities like cultural sensitivity, active listening, and adaptability are equally important. My background in social work has helped me tailor my communication style to establish rapport with a wide range of patients, from affluent customers to those facing disadvantage. This ability to connect and



ABOVE: David Sofatzis enjoys the combination of clinical health care, sales, and hands-on tasks like frame repairs and adjustments in his dispensing work.

provide professional advice ensures patients feel supported and valued.

### 7. How do you ensure your skills and knowledge stay up-to-date in such a fast-moving industry?

I stay informed by attending webinars and trade shows, which offer valuable insights into emerging trends and technologies. I also study educational materials from lens labs and engage with lens representatives to keep up with advancements. Collaborating with colleagues is another key strategy. By discussing challenging cases with the team, I not only share knowledge but also learn from their experiences. This ongoing exchange helps me continuously refine my skills and deliver better outcomes for patients.

### 8. Why did you become a member of ODA, and what value do you see in the organisation?

Joining ODA has been a great asset in growing my confidence and expertise. Their webinars provide practical knowledge that directly benefits my work, while their networking opportunities allow me to connect with others in the profession. ODA also plays a vital role in representing optical dispensers and supporting our continuing professional development, which is crucial for advancing the industry and enhancing patient care. ■