

New company aims to bring Ortho-K 'into the mainstream consumer market'

A new orthokeratology contact lens venture that plans to bring overnight vision correction to more patients was launched at Wembley stadium last week.

The company, i-Go lenses, has been established with a £1m marketing budget to offer practitioners a branded package based around an overnight vision correction (OVC) lens design that has not been previously available in the UK.

Confident that i-Go lenses will succeed, co-founding entrepreneurs Jennifer Golden and Malcolm Hughes, chief executive and chairman respectively, said they would provide every practice that signs up to become i-Go accredited with a patient list of 50 new OVC wearers within the first year.

The duo, who have a background in retail healthcare, will initially give 25 independent practices within the London M25 catchment area the opportunity to become i-Go accredited, creating exclusivity.

"A key part of our proposition is that i-Go should be relatively exclusive to those practitioners that sign up with us," Mr Hughes explained. "It is about making the practices that offer i-Go very unique, something that consumers will travel for."

As Mr Hughes and Ms Golden revealed their plans to about 50 London practitioners on January 30, they were supported by eye care professionals Shelly Bansal and Trusit Dave who have taken up the roles of head of professional services and independent clinical advisor within the company.

Mr Bansal, who is an OVC lens practitioner, has built up an OVC patient list of 50 over the past three years without using any marketing.

As a previous ortho-k wearer, who now uses i-Go lenses, the north-west London independent said: "After wearing i-Go OVC lenses for one night when I woke up in the morning I found that I could see better than I could with my previous lenses.

"My previous lenses were good and they worked, but I could never wait to get them out. With these lenses I also found that I could see better for longer."

In addition to offering a £1m marketing package, i-Go has secured an exclusive UK lens distribution deal with American-based Euclid Systems Corporation, a company that supplies OVC lenses to over 70,000 wearers in North

America and Asia.

The US business will supply i-Go accredited practices with its 'emerald' lens – the same lens that Mr Banal spoke highly of.

Practitioners will be able to order lenses over the



internet directly from Euclid, with the company storing customer details on its database and managing all re-orders and reminders.

Explaining why i-GO can make OVC a recognised option in the mainstream consumer eye care market Ms Golden said: "Getting customers into practices is the key thing and that is what has been missing from the whole concept. That is what has been stopping this market [sector] moving forward.

"The market has stuttered along over the years but looking at it from all the different angles and putting together this [i-Go's] package is how we are going to move the market forward."

Following the launch, once 25 practices have signed up, the company will embark on "building the i-Go brand and raising awareness of OVC." Combining advertising, PR and web activity into what Ms Golden called a "planned marketing and centrally managed campaign," it is predicted that the first instalment of advertising will appear in the London press next month.

Potential i-Go customers will be directed to call a free phone telephone number where they will be pre-screened for their suitability before being given the details of their nearest i-Go accredited practice. By pre-screening customers the company aims to keep wasted chair time to a minimum – something that Mr Hughes and Ms Golden found was a prominent concern amongst practitioners when researching the market.

Once accredited, practices will receive an i-Go support package that includes a free state-of-the-art topographer which is not available to buy on the market, an online training programme, clear prescribing guidelines and "as much clinical support as they want and need". Practitioners in return will pay a monthly management fee of £17.50 for each i-Go OVC patient on its list.

The company plans to accredit an additional 25 i-Go practices during its second six-months in business, increasing by 25 more annually thereafter.

For more information on the venture contact 0208 849 8830 or visit www.igolenses.com.

