

# Take 5 with a US SMILE practice

A conversation with Steven Vold, MD, owner of Vold Vision in Fayetteville, Arkansas, and Christine Scarlett, Director of Marketing and Laser Vision Correction, Vold Vision.



Seeing beyond

## A surgeon's perspective

**Q** Dr. Vold, why did you choose the VisuMax femtosecond laser from ZEISS for your practice?

**A** We evaluated close to a half dozen different lasers before we decided to purchase the VisuMax® femtosecond laser from ZEISS. For me, three factors set this laser apart from the others. First, the quality of the flaps is exquisite and extremely reproducible. We've had outstanding results since day one. Second, being cornea-based, the suction of the VisuMax laser is quite gentle and has little impact on intraocular pressure (IOP). Third, no other laser on the market at the time could perform small incision lenticule extraction (SMILE®), which I consider one of the most incredible breakthroughs in refractive surgery in the last 20 years. I knew I had to offer SMILE to my patients.

**Q** You are now converting 65% to 70% of your laser vision correction patients to SMILE. Why is that?

**A** To me, SMILE is the preeminent next-generation refractive surgery, and we frame SMILE as such when discussing it with our patients. In addition to producing excellent results with fast recovery, SMILE has a favorable safety profile. In my experience, dry eye symptoms are minimal compared with what we have seen with LASIK flaps. And, of course, with SMILE, there's no risk of flap complications such as dislocation.

**Q** What do you consider to be the pillars of a healthy, profitable refractive surgery practice?

**A** First, you must have the best technology. If I'm a patient, I want the very best lasers working on my eyes. I'm sure surgeons who are using older technology are doing just fine, but in my opinion, they're not delivering elite care. Second, you must have the proper team and the right processes in place. We have a phenomenal team who are efficient and responsive, ensuring that patients feel cared for. Third, I believe a really strong pillar is having a good industry partner, and that's what ZEISS is.

**Q** How has your partnership with ZEISS helped you achieve your goals?

**A** ZEISS is incredibly supportive of everything we do. We have opportunities to be involved in their clinical trials. We often see some of their newer technologies before they're widely available, and we get a chance to work with a team of experts who are the smartest and best in the world at what they do. Not only do they offer top-notch products, but they also support their customers with live demonstrations and hands-on training. I credit ZEISS for much of our success in the refractive surgery arena.

**Q** Why do you think patients choose Vold Vision over your competition?

**A** Vold Vision has developed a reputation as the state-of-the-art eye care facility in northwest Arkansas. Patients come to us from all over the country. They're looking for a practice with the latest technology where they'll receive elite care, and we have become that practice.

## Insight from a marketer

**Q** Ms. Scarlett, in your opinion, why should a refractive surgery practice have a dedicated refractive manager?

**A** Coming from a background in sales and marketing, I know that behind any successful brand or product, there's a team of structured professionals who are given goals and incentivized to ensure success on every level. Many surgeons become frustrated when they invest in various ad campaigns and marketing strategies but don't have an effective way to track their ROI. That's something a refractive manager does.

At Vold Vision, we have systems in place to track where our patient leads are coming from, the quality of those leads, and the conversion rates from lead to consultation to candidate to surgery. So many practices leave an astonishingly high amount of revenue on the table through their lack of optimized lead processes.

Consistency is essential for creating a superior patient experience and concierge-level program. A proactive refractive manager oversees this process and ensures that the team is following—or enhancing and evolving—those daily protocols and procedures to uphold the practice's standards of excellence for each and every patient throughout their entire journey

**Q** How do you define the Vold Vision brand, and how has that brand helped drive your success?

**A** Many people think of branding as your logo, font, website, or online static image, but it really is a living, breathing entity. Once your brand is defined, it must be reflected in every patient interaction and marketing touch point. How do patients or prospective patients feel when they think of your practice? We want them to feel safe, informed, appreciated, and welcomed. Dr. Vold always leads with a servant mentality and mindset, and we reflect that in every aspect of our brand.

## Take 5 with a US SMILE practice

### **Q** Why do you think patients choose Vold Vision over your competition?

**A** As Dr. Vold says, having the best technology with consistent excellent outcomes is paramount, along with a five-star team and servant leadership that owns their piece of the puzzle. One of the top factors in our growth and success is our obsession with the patient experience. Patient-centered care is an overused phrase but at its core, it encompasses every patient interaction from digital to in-person. Our branding is geared toward how patients feel when they meet us online, whether it's through social media or the web. We want to make sure that patients are responding well to that virtual first impression.

Also essential to a successful refractive practice is a team of highly trained counselors (and enough of them) who have the energetic excitement and time to spend with each patient. Importantly, counselors must be trained to gracefully handle questions about pricing or the competition from patients who are shopping around, so that by the end of the call, the patient makes the appointment with you because of how great their interaction was with your counselor.

I also believe that overly discounting or price-matching does not bring in more patients, nor does it convince them to choose you over your competition. Results, experience, and surgical options do. Our fees are always higher than nearby practices, yet that has not been a detriment when patients are comparing our offerings. We are more expensive because we build value in what we offer, from our state-of-the-art technology to our exceptional level of care.

### **Q** SMILE is a differentiator, but how has it helped Vold Vision succeed?

**A** We typically see two types of patients for laser vision correction (LVC): those who say, "I want to get out of my glasses, doc. Tell me what to do," and those who have done their research and have hesitations. The latter group is the demographic for whom SMILE has become such a differentiator for us.

This population has held off choosing LVC for years. They may have heard LASIK causes dry eye, or they may believe the myth that it won't correct astigmatism. When these people are exposed to a groundbreaking advancement such as SMILE®, they're hopeful and excited to look into LVC again. SMILE is an incredibly powerful tool that we've leveraged effectively in reaching a larger demographic.

I think now more than ever, consumers are driven by convenience, and they would rather make an appointment with Vold Vision versus visiting several practices, because we offer all of the LVC options including SMILE. While it may not be appropriate for every patient, SMILE reinforces patients' perceptions that we are the experts who will evaluate all of the available options and take care of their eyes with the best technology.



#### **About Dr. Steven Vold**

Dr. Vold founded Vold Vision in 2011. He is an award-winning, board-certified ophthalmologist based in northwest Arkansas with more 24 years of experience. He specializes in complex glaucoma and cataract diagnosis and treatment, as well as groundbreaking laser vision correction treatments. Dr. Vold was the first eye surgeon in the state of Arkansas to offer SMILE.



#### **About Christine Scarlett**

Christine Scarlett is Director of Marketing and Laser Vision Correction for Vold Vision. She oversees, evaluates, and manages the marketing, processes, procedures, and protocols that ensure the continued growth and excellent patient care that embody the Vold Vision brand.