

# Practice Management Apps for Ophthalmology: How to Get Started

Everyone is pressed for time. Fortunately, becoming more efficient while saving money can be accomplished with the use of mobile apps, said Vinay A. Shah, MD, at Dean McGee Eye Institute in Oklahoma City. He estimates that he has saved an hour per day since incorporating apps into his routine. “Solely considering my use of airline and frequent flier apps, monitoring investments, and accessing email, I save a tremendous amount of time.”

**Apps in practice.** Just as apps provide utility in your personal life, they can help manage your practice. The benefits are myriad, running the gamut from basic business functions to education and finding patients the least expensive medications.

**Not app savvy?** For those who haven’t used apps, it can be reassuring to know that finding and purchasing these apps is relatively easy and inexpensive.

## Getting Started

**Plenty to choose from.** “Anything and everything you can imagine is available as an app,” said Dr. Shah. Indeed, if you don’t stay focused, “it is easy to get distracted by all the extraneous information.”

**Where to find them.** Apple’s App Store remains a comprehensive resource. Access it at <https://apps.apple.com/us/genre/ios/id36>. Google Play also offers a wide variety of apps at <https://play.google.com/store/apps>.

**Read the reviews.** “I use Google to search for reviews of apps and try out those that appear to be a good fit,” said Howard Chen MD, a solo practitioner in Goodyear, Arizona.

**Typically, apps come at little or no cost.** “I spend mere pennies for most of the apps that I use, and their utility far outweighs the cost,” said Ken Lord, MD, who practices in St. George, Utah.

**How many apps on your phone?** Not so long ago, phones had limited storage, and underutilized apps had to be deleted to make space for other tasks. Because cellphones now come with copious amounts of memory and everything can be backed up to the cloud, storage is not an issue, said Dr. Shah. “I regularly use 25 to 30 apps, but at one time, I counted 100+ apps on my phone,” he said.

**Some ergonomic rules of thumb.** Your neck and fingers are susceptible to pain, stiffness, and other issues by not using proper posture and technique when accessing your apps. Dr. Shah, whose daily screen time is between three and four hours, said, “Use different fingers when typing and keep your neck up, rather than down, when looking at your device. It is much better to lift your phone than to bend your neck. Repetitive hand movements can lead to carpal tunnel–like issues [texting thumb] and other issues with your hands, as well as pain or tension in your neck [texting neck].”

## AAO Mobile App

The Academy’s AAO Ophthalmic Education App features content from EyeWiki and three areas of the ONE Network: News, 1-Minute Videos, Diagnose This, and, coming later this year, *Wills Eye Manual*. Customize your feed based on your area(s) of interest to view content and receive alerts when relevant content is published.

For more information, go to [aao.org/education-app](http://aao.org/education-app).

## Apps to Consider

**Centralize communications.** Google offers G Suite, which can serve as a “backbone for your business’ infrastructure,” according to Dr. Lord. Collaborating via secured messaging, attending video conferences, emailing, and sharing files are some of its most useful features, he said. “It is a really convenient way to communicate from anywhere. When exchanging patient information, we remain HIPAA compliant by using medical record numbers instead of names and birthdays,” he explained. After your practice signs up for G Suite (<https://gsuite.google.com>), you will be charged a monthly fee depending on which edition you use and how many staff will be using it.

**Online storage.** The Google Drive app is a cloud-based online storage service that earns high marks from Dr. Shah. “My whole life is on Google.

BY LESLIE BURLING, CONTRIBUTING WRITER, INTERVIEWING HOWIE CHEN, MD, KEN LORD, MD, AND VINAY A. SHAH, MD.



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## Apps Developed By Your Colleagues

**Save time in the clinic.** EyeHandbook, developed by Drs. Shah and Lord, places multiple ophthalmic testing tools, coding guidelines, informational videos, and calculators (and much more) at your fingertips.

**Educate your patients.** The goal of Eye Patient, said Dr. Lord, “is to save physicians time in the lane by giving patients a solid go-to resource.” In addition to providing educational videos, this app allows patients to monitor their vision with functions like the Amsler grid, and it can assist them in their daily life with a magnifier function, he said.

I can organize my documents and share them with friends, family, staff, and colleagues,” he said.

**Track expenditures.** Keeping up with costs is easy with Expensify and QuickBooks. “My favorite app is Expensify because it enables me to do the bookkeeping for my practice, which, with the app, takes me less than 30 minutes per month and eliminates my need for an accountant. I am able to upload my receipts to the cloud and can create monthly reports, as well as create reports for my equipment, food, and mileage, for example,” said Dr. Chen.

QuickBooks has similar functionality, plus a payroll option, he said.

**Check your credit score.** Keeping tabs on your credit score may be particularly significant to ophthalmologists who have outstanding student loans or those who are looking to open a practice. Dr. Chen recommended using either the Credit Karma or Experian apps.

**Process credit card payments.** There are multiple credit card processing services. Dr. Chan has had a good experience with the SwipeSimple app, which is available through Payment Depot (<http://paymentdepot.com/l-swipe-simple/>). He advises looking for transparency in fees, and he warned, “Do not get locked into a contract with early termination penalties. Many companies promise to beat their competitors, but customers frequently discover that their fees are much higher after receiving the first few statements.”

**Input contact information from business cards.** With CamCard, users can take a photo of a business card, and

the app will save the information to your phone’s contact list, as well as import the original image. “This is a huge timesaver considering all of the business cards that physicians exchange daily,” Dr. Shah said. Other options include Abbyy, ScanBizCards, Wantedly People, and Evernote.

**Keep drug costs in check.** Prescriptions can vary tremendously in price, depending on where they are purchased. GoodRx facilitates a quick comparison between pharmacies so patients know their most cost-effective options. Simply enter a drug name and zip code, and GoodRx lists the out-of-pocket charges at local pharmacies. “We used to ask patients to call around for the best price. Using this app not only saves time, it can potentially save your patients a lot of money,” said Dr. Shah.

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Dr. Lord is a retina specialist at Retina Associates of Southern Utah in St. George. *Relevant financial disclosures: EyePatient: O.*

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See disclosure key, page 10. For full disclosures, see this article at [aao.org/eyenet](http://aao.org/eyenet).



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