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Growing the eye health category

Overview

If the eyes are the windows to our souls, what does your eye care category say about you? Those tiny little bottles of eyedrops are easily ignored with so many bigger, brighter items competing for attention on your pharmacy shelves. There's more to eye health than eyedrops, though, and this category has great growth potential.

For example, the dry eye market in Australia has represented almost \$40 million in sales so far this year, demonstrating growth of 13 per cent since 2011¹. The total contact lens care market across Australia and New Zealand is estimated at \$US22 million annually².

Pharmacy has an important role to play in access to eye care for the community. The three major distribution channels for eye care products are eye care professionals (eg, optometrists) grocery and pharmacy. Of these, pharmacy has the largest distribution network in terms of store numbers and has by far the largest sales

Learning objectives:

- Discuss the eye health market.
- Develop a patient-focused eye health category.
- Grow the eye health category.

volume, representing 72 per cent of all contact lens care sales (Figure 2)².

Category management

Category management has been widely practised in retail since the 1980s, when the concept was first proposed by Australian-born, US-based academic Brian Harris³. It recognises categories as strategic business units for the purposes of planning and achieving sales and profit goals⁴. This approach provides for a more granular level of detail than major departments, but a more focused view than the individual product level. Category management helps to direct customer attention to more profitable selections and can form the basis of strengthened supplier relationships.

However, in embracing the advantages of category management, retailers need to avoid the pitfalls of allowing vendors to control their shelves. Provided that you take a proactive approach to managing your own categories, there are benefits to be gained.

More than eyedrops

So, what is the scope of the eye health category? Eyedrops are the obvious

starting point and they cover a range of eye conditions, including:

- Dry eye.
- Allergies.
- Infections.
- Eye protection.
- Cosmetic use.

Other inclusions in the eye health category can be:

- Contact lens care.
- Sunglasses.
- Reading glasses.
- Eye and lid cleansers.
- Nutritional supplements.

Nutritional supplements

Eye health professionals may recommend topical eye treatment in conjunction with nutritional supplements for optimum patient outcomes. If relevant nutritional supplements have not been recommended, this is an opportunity for pharmacists to provide appropriate advice.

Nutritional supplements recognised as having a role in good eye health include beta-carotene, vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc, lutein and zeaxanthin, and long-chain omega-3 fatty acids⁵.

Nutritional supplements have been investigated for treatment of age-related macular degeneration and high-dose blends of specific antioxidants have been shown to have benefits. Evidence-based formulations, consistent with the outcomes of the 'Age-Related Eye Disease Study' (AREDS), are available in the Australian market and combine

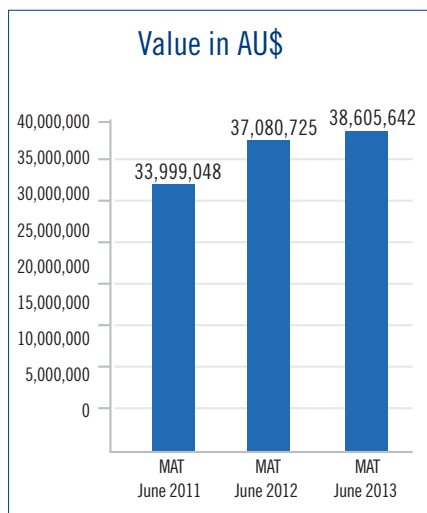


Figure 1: IMS MAT 6/2013, Australian dry eye market¹.

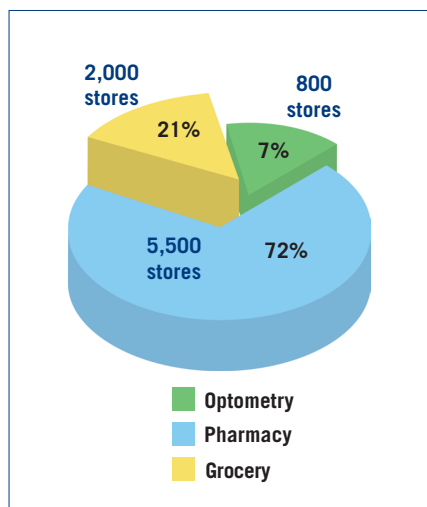


Figure 2: Channel composition by sales volume, contact lens care².

The original AREDS formulation consists of:

Betacarotene	15mg
Vitamin C	500mg
Vitamin E	400IU
Zinc	80mg*
Copper	2mg

The subsequent AREDS 2 study expanding on the original study investigated further antioxidants⁶:

Lutein	10mg
Zeaxanthin	2mg
Vitamin C	500mg
Vitamin E	400IU*
Zinc	80mg*
Copper	2mg

*80mg exceeds the maximum recommended daily dose of 50mg allowed for manufacturers of complementary medicines by TGA.