

Optics startup Clear delivers eyecare on demand

■ STAFF

Imagine receiving an eye examination from any digital device and having an updated vision eyeglasses in hand in a matter of minutes.

Clear, the world's first digital optical prescription company, is making it possible and betting that it's going to change eyecare as we know it.

The Washington, DC-based startup offers a 10-minute virtual eye test that can be taken from anywhere. Once the test is completed, Clear's prescription algorithms instantly create a digital model of the user's eye and visual performance generating a 20/20 vision prescription.

We talked to Clear Co-founder and CEO Dr. Brandon Zimmerman, PhD., a graduate of University of Rochester's Institute of Optics and former optical physicist at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center, to under-

stand the growing need for better access to eyecare and get a closer look at how Clear aims to make a lasting impact.



Zimmerman

THE NEED TO DECENTRALIZE THE VISION INDUSTRY

According to Zimmerman, human eyesight is worsening at an unprec-

edented rate which, especially for families without vision insurance or an optometrist nearby, can significantly impact education and quality of life. There's also a lack of eye care providers and an industry-wide struggle to meet consumer demand for eyecare services at a global level.

"We are living in a time where 50 percent of the vision population don't make time for their annual eye exam due to access and inconvenience, and another 2.5 billion people don't have access to exams at all," said Zim-

merman. "Only by decentralizing the vision industry and making prescription services available from any digital device can eyecare providers deliver eyecare on demand."

He realized a solution to the problem while working with optical technology at NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center in 2017. The same technology and algorithms used for robotic vision in space could be used for our eyes at home, ultimately eliminating the need for specialized in-clinic hardware and creating a faster, more accessible and more scalable prescription service for the masses.

CLEAR PROVIDES ON-DEMAND ACCESS TO EYECARE

Zimmerman created Clear in 2020, along with co-founders Ian Moore and Carole Egerton. Moore is a growth strategy and operations expert with the New

York Times and Verizon. He also serves as chief growth officer for Clear. Egerton, Clear's chief product officer, was a member of the founding team at Glasses Direct and a pioneer of the now industry-standard home trial system and first virtual try-on for eyewear.

The Clear Eye Test is a patent pending virtual screening that can be taken from any laptop, tablet, television, smartphone or headset. In addition to generating a prescription, it also assesses diagnostic conditions, including glaucoma, cataracts, age-related macular degeneration (AMD), and pediatric myopia management.

The startup's initial focus is on the online eyewear market. Clear estimates that online eyewear retailers experience 30-60 percent drop off rates at the point of purchase because customers do not have a usable prescription.

"Our virtual solution will increase access to a new prescription for consumers, while also improving conversion rates at



Moore

point of purchase for online eyewear retailers," said Zimmerman. "We're creating a more accessible and scalable solution for driving prescription growth across the \$178 Billion eyewear sector."

WHAT'S NEXT: ROCHESTER'S OPTICS AND PHOTONICS HUB FUELS STARTUP'S GROWTH

Zimmerman credits the company's growth to date to the rich resources of the Rochester region. Optical engineers from The University of Rochester and the Institute of Optics have helped to fast-track Clear's product development. As part of the current cohort of early-stage startups building their business through the Luminate NY accelerator at NextCorps in downtown Rochester, Clear's team has also connected to the region's key strategic and clinical resources to help scale the company.

"As an innovator of optics technology, Clear is an ideal fit for the Luminate accelerator," said Dr. Sujatha Ramanujan, managing director of Luminate. "Their col-

laboration with Rochester's deep OPI ecosystem can enrich their work and advance their mission to decentralize and improve access to eyecare."

Zimmerman said he hopes to build a robust research and development center and a clinical trials site in the Rochester community. He also plans on hiring the region's talent in optics, optometry, ophthalmology, prescription lens manufacturing, and vision science, and to secure additional financing to propel commercialization efforts.

"We are keen on operating our FDA clinical trial right here in the optics and photonics capital of the world," said Zimmerman. "Luminate's connection with the University of Rochester's Institute of Optics, Flaum Eye Institute and the Center for Visual Sciences, along with their international investment network, can be instrumental to our commercial launch and our Seed Round financing at the end of this year."

For more information on Clear, visit clear-eyetest.com. To get updates on Luminate and all the emerging technologies being developed in Rochester, go to luminate.org.