

Family Planning

These two O.D.s chose corporate optometry for the flexibility

Swati Gandhi, O.D., had to return to work four weeks after her first child was born. As the leaseholder at a Pennsylvania corporate eye care office, it was her responsibility to keep the practice open—and she had cobbled together all the time off

she could. Soon after, she and her husband, an airline employee, moved to Chicago, and Dr. Gandhi decided she'd rather be employed than tackle the task of running a practice.

Recently, she had a second baby and the difference was noticeable, she says. She had six weeks of maternity leave from her job with America's Best Contacts & Eyeglasses, during which she didn't have to worry about the practice or finding coverage. "You wouldn't think that two weeks more would make such a difference, but it did. When I returned to work after six weeks, I felt much more rested and ready," she says.

Dr. Gandhi works four days a week, providing patient care for about 31 hours. "I do like to be my own boss, but at this point in my life, I like having someone else taking care of the management of a practice. I can concentrate on patient care at work and my family at home," she says.

She and her husband have worked it out so that he works the evening shift, meaning there's no time the children need to be in daycare. It's not perfect because the couple's time together is limited, but the stress level is low.

"I don't take work home with me in the evening. I don't worry about whether there are enough patients on the book tomorrow or whether I've scheduled enough staff. When it was my practice, my stress level was at an

eight or a nine out of 10. Now it's at a one or a two," she says.

She says she could return to a practice ownership setting one day, but for now, she's a happier person being employed.



Dr. Gandhi

Shira Gelb, O.D., another Chicago-area America's Best-affiliated O.D., had another compelling reason to choose an employed situation, she says. "Due to religious reasons I am unable to work on Saturdays, which are critical days in optometry. Since most corporate stores are open on Sundays and few doctors want to work that day, it works out well for me. I'm able to split my week with another doctor and still work full time," she says.

A 2004 graduate of Illinois



Dr. Gelb

College of Optometry, Dr. Gelb had her first baby earlier this year, and the experience reinforced her decision. "Thanks to the great support I have from my colleagues, I was able to stay home and concentrate on my family knowing that my patients were taken care of," she says.

Dr. Gelb has returned to full-time work, although she transferred to a location closer to her home. She appreciated that the company would do that for her. "I felt more comfortable about going back to work since I was able to go home during lunch to spend some time with him." He's now in a daycare center near the office.

She says with the support and advice of her colleagues, she'll become adept at juggling the demands of being a new mom and a full-time O.D. Dr. Gandhi is one of those doling out advice. "Stay

focused, and stay organized," she suggests to Dr. Gelb and other new moms. **WO**

"When it was my practice, my stress level was at an eight or nine out of 10. Now it's a one or a two."
—Dr. Gandhi

Winners...

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patients for medical care without worrying about losing the patient for other services. The practice is expanding and relocating its second location—and there will be no dispensary there either. Before Dr. Muckley arrived, the practice did not fit contact lenses. She became the director of optomet-

ric service, including the contact lens department, specializing in post-surgical and other specialty lenses.

Now that the legislation has passed, Dr. Muckley is redirecting her attention to the externship program the practice has started for The Ohio State University College of Optometry fourth-year students. She's a 1997 graduate of the school.

In addition to earning the AOA's Young O.D. of the Year award, Dr. Muckley was the recipient of the OOA's Outstanding Service

Award. She is also a member of the International Optometric Glaucoma Society and on the East-West Eye Conference committee. She anticipates running for an elected position on the OOA board at some point. "I have a 3-year-old son, and a board position requires a big commitment of time and energy. I plan to stay very active in my current roles, and when he's a little older, I want to become even more involved," she says. **WO**