# Urgency Culture in a 24/7 World

Meenal Agarwal, OD
IG: @dr.meenalagarwal
E-mail: meenal.ag@gmail.com
Podcast: *Uncover Your Eyes*

UNCOVER
YOUR EYES
WITH DR. MEENAL

---

# Disclosure Statement

Dr. Meenal Agarwal has no financial interests to disclose.

---

# A little about me...

Graduated from U of Waterloo Optometry School
3 Practices in GTA
Top 3 Med Podcast Host "Uncover Your Eyes"
3 kids who challenge me

UNCOVER
YOUR EYES
WITH DR. MEENAL

## Urgency Culture "*Hustle Culture*"

Urgency culture is a mindset that values *speed over sustainability*, and *responsiveness over reason*. It tells us that if we're not doing something *right now*, we're falling behind.

In today's "always-on" culture, it's easy to confuse motion with progress. Many practices—despite being busy—find themselves stagnating, not scaling.

## 💣 Characteristics

- Feeling guilty for not replying to emails or messages instantly

- Believing that slowing down = laziness or incompetence

- Being praised for being "always available"

- Making fast decisions out of fear, not clarity

- Equating productivity with worth

## ⚠️ In Healthcare

Urgency culture can look like:

- Rushing through appointments to keep up with the schedule

- Making snap decisions without listening fully to patients

- Ignoring your own body's cues for rest, food, or hydration

- Chronic stress masked as "being a good doctor/nurse/therapist"

## 🧠 Why It's Harmful

- Erodes critical thinking and empathy
- Increases burnout and compassion fatigue
- Reduces quality of care
- Leads to emotional detachment from patients and from self

- Organizations entrenched in urgency culture report a 37% decline in decision-making quality, and 42% fewer breakthrough ideas.

## Urgency Culture

Urgency says "now."
Instead of reacting fast, try responding *intentionally*.

54% of workers spend the majority of their day reacting to "urgent" tasks that aren't aligned with real priorities—resulting in wasted time and reduced impact.

## Urgency Culture's Affect on Mental Health

Constant Activation of the Stress Response
What happens: When urgency is the norm, the brain's *amygdala* and *hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal (HPA) axis* stay in a constant "threat" mode.

Impact:
    Elevated cortisol and adrenaline levels
    Poor sleep quality
    Impaired concentration and memory

Study: Chronic workplace time pressure is linked to higher stress hormone levels and increased risk of burnout.

## Urgency Culture's Affect on Mental Health

**Burnout & Emotional Exhaustion**
**What happens: Urgency culture often normalizes overwork, leaving little recovery time.**

**Impact:**
   **Emotional depletion**
   **Cynicism and detachment from work or relationships**
   **Reduced sense of accomplishment**

**Study: A meta-analysis of over 182 studies found that *time pressure* was a significant predictor of burnout, especially emotional exhaustion**

---

## Urgency Culture's Affect on Mental Health

**Anxiety & Decision Fatigue**
**What happens: Urgency forces rapid decisions with incomplete information, straining executive function.**

**Impact:**
   **Increased anxiety**
   **Poorer judgment**
   **Greater likelihood of errors (critical in healthcare settings)**

**Study: Time pressure has been shown to impair decision quality and increase cognitive load, especially in high-stakes roles**

---

## Urgency Culture's Affect on Mental Health

**Physical Health Risks**
**Chronic urgency can lead to:**
   **Hypertension**
   **Suppressed immune function**
   **Increased risk of cardiovascular disease**

**Study: Links job strain and urgency-driven stress with a 23% higher risk of heart attack**

## Urgency Culture's Affect on Mental Health

In medical professions—where you already have genuine urgency (emergencies, patient care)—layering an *artificial urgency culture* (constant emails, unrealistic deadlines, administrative overload) compounds stress.

This not only harms providers' mental health but also increases medical errors, which research consistently ties to fatigue and burnout.

## Roles in Our Clinic

**Staff**

**Manager**

**Associate Doctor**

**Owner Doctor**

## Staff Priorities

**Welcoming Patients**

Staff create a positive environment by greeting patients promptly and warmly, ensuring they feel valued and comfortable from the start.

**Addressing Patient Concerns**

Staff listen carefully, empathize, and provide clear responses to alleviate anxiety and build trust throughout the patient visit.

## Staff Priorities: Patient Education and Support




**Educating patients on eye health conditions, treatment options, and proper eyewear use is essential for better health outcomes and care compliance.**

**Staff must communicate clearly and compassionately, explaining diagnostic tests and addressing patient concerns to empower active eye health management.**

## Staff Priorities



**Auxiliary Tests**

**Staff clearly explain OCT, Retinal Photography, Visual Field, Pachymetry, Topography, IPL, RF, and Axial Length Measurements to patients, detailing their purpose, procedure, and benefits to enhance understanding and patient engagement.**

## Staff Priorities

**Product Sales**

**Revenue Impact of Contact Lenses and Glasses Sales :**
- **Contact lenses account for 25% to 33% of total practice revenue and grow faster than glasses sales.**
- **Contact lens patients return twice as often, generating about $290 to $330 more annually than glasses-only patients, resulting in over double the lifetime gross profit.**
- **Glasses sales also contribute significantly with profit margins averaging 2.6 times the cost, and selling extra pairs boosts clinic profitability.**

## Staff Priorities

**Adherence to Protocols and Standards:**
- Essential for patient safety, quality care, and legal compliance.
- Staff must follow standardized procedures, maintain confidentiality, and uphold safety guidelines to ensure consistent and ethical care.

**Compliance and Documentation:**
- Accurate record keeping and strict adherence to privacy regulations to support clinical decisions, and protect patient confidentiality under laws like HIPAA.
- Detailed documentation facilitates effective team communication, reduces errors, supports legal compliance, and enhances patient safety.
- Staff responsibilities include recording precise patient information, and clear documentation.

## Staff Priorities
**Efficiency and Time Management**

- Efficient management of appointments and records.
- Utilizing automated systems enhances reduces administrative burdens.
- Daily team huddles and strategic clinical layouts support timely patient transitions and minimize wait times.

## Staff Non-Urgent Tasks:
- Administrative Duties
  - Accounting
  - Bill payments
  - Filing
  - Inventory
  - Frame board management
- Recalls
- Equipment maintenance and calibration
- Reviewing Protocols and Staff Training

## Manager Priorities:

**Patient Care**
- Commitment to High-Quality Patient Care
- Addressing concerns promptly
- Gathering feedback
- Patient satisfaction directly influences clinic profitability and operational success. Quality perceptions affects 17% – 27% of financial metrics.

**Leadership**
- Effective leadership balances operational efficiency with compassionate care, and continuous staff development.
- Positive Work Culture

**Compliance and Regulations**
- Stay current with healthcare laws, privacy regulations and standards from regulatory bodies to maintain clinic integrity and patient safety.

## Manager Priorities:

**Staff Management**
- Cohesive team that delivers excellent patient care and supports a positive work environment.
- Staff Recruitment – competent, not a "CAVE" employee

**Operational Efficiency**
- Optimizing workflow and processes
- Streamlining doctor schedules, automating administrative tasks, improving team collaboration, optimizing patient flow, and designing resource-efficient spaces.
- These strategies maximize resource utilization, reduce delays, and maintain high-quality patient care and satisfaction.

## Manager Non-Urgent Tasks:

**Delegation**
- Admin duties such as scheduling, billing, filing, and inventory, allowing focus on strategic priorities and patient care quality.

**Avoid Micromanaging Specialized Roles**
- Managers must avoid micromanaging specialized clinical tasks, empowering trained technicians to perform technical procedures while providing oversight and ensuring protocol adherence.
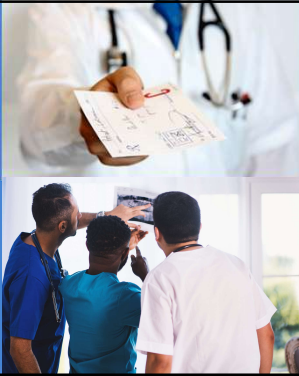
**Process Improvement**
- Focus on identifying workflow enhancements to increase efficiency, reduce patient wait times, and optimize staff performance .

**Financial Management**
- Budgeting, revenue generation, cost control, and financial analysis to ensure clinic profitability and sustainability.
- KPIs

## Associate Doctor Priorities:

- **Emergency Eye Care**
- **Referrals**
- **Collaboration**
- **Documentation**
- **Time Management**

## Owner Doctor Priorities:

- **Clinical Excellence**
  - **Setting an example**
- **Team Building**
- **Patient Satisfaction**
  - **Including Google Reviews**
- **Staff Leadership & Development**
- **Operational Efficiency and Strategic Planning**
  - **Optimizing clinic workflows**
  - **Streamlining processes**

## Owner Doctor Non-Urgent Tasks:

- **Innovation and Professional Development**
- **Financial Planning**
- **Analyzing Clinic Performance metrics**
  - **KPIs**
- **Mentoring**
- **Technology**
- **Marketing and Business Development**
  - **Branding**
  - **Social Media**

## Key Takeaways

- Identify false urgency in your daily workflow
- Use clear triage protocols to protect your time and focus
- Support each other
- Urgency culture breaks when the team moves together

## Thank You!

Meenal Agarwal, OD
IG: @dr.meenalagarwal
E-mail: meenal.ag@gmail.com
Podcast: *Uncover Your Eyes*

## On behalf of Vision Expo, we sincerely thank you for being with us this year.

**Vision Expo Has Gone Green!**

We have eliminated all paper session evaluation forms. Please be sure to complete your electronic session evaluations online when you login to request your CE Letter for each course you attended! Your feedback is important to us as our Education Planning Committee considers content and speakers for future meetings to provide you with the best education possible.

vision expo