PixelOptics lens takes leap forward

Clinical trials of the electro-active lens show it will be marketable probably next year.

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Roanoke optometrist and inventor Ron Blum and his PixelOptics executives typically play their cards close to the vest.

Not this time.

Blum has long said the company's electronic-focusing lens, if the technical details worked out, could revolutionize the eyeglass industry. Now, PixelOptics reports that the innovative lens has taken a leap forward toward taking the lens to market.

Dwight Duston is the ophthalmic lens company's executive vice president of research and development. He expressed unequivocal confidence Tuesday that clinical trials to date of the company's electro-active lens show it works and will be marketable — probably next year. He said it and its frames will look like any eyeglasses and compare in price to high-end progressive addition lenses.

PixelOptics, based in Roanoke County, employs 45 people. The majority work in Roanoke.

Blum has expressed many times his commitment to the Roanoke Valley, its economy and high-technology community, adding that good news for PixelOptics is good news for the region.

Duston said it is difficult to envision now a major roadblock for the lens, which is designed to treat presbyopia — a condition that begins to affect the vision of many people when they reach middle age and is generally corrected with bifocals or progressive addition lenses.

Duston said clinical trial research has demonstrated that people fully accept looking through the lens — that it has the same clarity as other eyeglass lenses.

Now, he said, controlled trials with subjects will help determine people's preferences for how the lens focuses. PixelOptics says the lenses "focus faster than the blink of an eye, using chemistry, electricity and optics, and do so without moving parts."

In October, PixelOptics announced a breakthrough in another type of eyeglass lens, but one without electronic focusing.

The company said then that its atLast lens is a much improved version of traditional bifocals and trifocals. It suggested that the atLast lens offers wider, clearer vision, much improved intermediate vision, less "jump" between near and far vision zones and more cosmetic appeal because it is free of the visible lines that many customers feel signal they are well past their prime. The atLast lens emerged out of research for the electro-active lenses, Blum said.

Online:
www.pixeloptics.com