

# Perspectives on Vision: A Detailed Look at the Phorcides Analytic Software and the Benefits it Brings to Topography- Guided LASIK

*Featuring:*



Mark Lobanoff, MD<sup>1</sup>



Stephen Wexler, MD<sup>2</sup>



Doyle Stulting, MD<sup>3</sup>

1. North Suburban Eye Specialists, Minneapolis, MN  
2. TLC Laser Eye Center, St Louis, MO  
3. Woolfson Eye Institute, Atlanta, GA

# Introduction

Topography-guided laser-assisted in-situ keratomileusis (LASIK) considers the shape of the anterior corneal surface and uses corneal curvature data from preoperative corneal topography measures. These treatment profiles help reduce higher order aberrations (including spherical aberration) by compensating for cosine effect and by normalizing the overall surface of the cornea. This is done by flattening elevations and relatively steepening flatter areas by ablating around them.

Determining the correct sphere magnitude, cylinder magnitude and cylinder axis for treatment with topography-guided LASIK has been a dilemma among surgeons. With the recent introduction of the Phorcides analytic software, treatment planning can be simplified and the treatment accurately calculated with the exact treatment profile required without further calculations by the surgeon.<sup>1,2</sup>

Mark Lobanoff, MD, Stephen Wexler, MD and Doyle Stulting, MD discuss Phorcides technology and the clinical benefits it brings to topography-guided LASIK.



**Mark Lobanoff, MD**  
North Suburban Eye Specialists,  
Minneapolis, MN

## What is topography-guided LASIK?

Topography-guided LASIK is treatment based on the unique corneal topography of an individual's eye. It not only treats sphere and cylinder, but also treats corneas differently than any other prior laser refractive technology by essentially smoothing topographical irregularities on the corneal surface. By reducing the surface irregularities and creating a more uniform corneal surface, better vision can be achieved.

## How do surgeons complete surgical planning for topography-guided LASIK?

The specific treatment planning approach for topography-guided LASIK is dependent on the laser platform and manufacturer, but all generally use similar clinical data to guide the treatment. For example, the WaveLight® topography guided platform is a topography-guided LASIK procedure approved in the United States where the following treatment planning approaches have been used: 1) manifest refraction, 2) TMR, 3) 50/50, and 4) Phorcides software. Treatment planning on this platform was originally based solely on the manifest refraction astigmatism; however, this method did not provide optimal results. The topographic irregularities on the cornea contribute to the manifest refraction measured by manual refraction at the phoropter. This means that removal of the topographic irregularities will affect the resulting manifest refraction. By ignoring the refractive effect of eliminating the topographic irregularities, surgeons did not see visual outcomes as good as they expected. Additionally, if the topographic irregularities are large, the astigmatic axis resulting from treating the manifest could result in significant residual errors.<sup>1</sup> A contrasting method, topography-modified refraction (TMR), based treatment on the anterior corneal astigmatism measured by topography, ignoring the manifest refraction.<sup>3</sup> Overall, the results of TMR were better than treating based on the manifest refraction.<sup>4</sup> However, there were cases in which this strategy led to the astigmatic axis being “flipped” after surgery. In other cases, residual astigmatism remained that kept patients from achieving their best vision. Over time, the 50/50 method was developed by Dr. Wexler. This method used 50% of the difference in magnitude between manifest and topography measured along with the axis measured by topography. This method yielded good results and almost never flipped an astigmatic axis. However, it often left behind some untreated astigmatism and thus resulted in some residual refractive errors that reduced the overall uncorrected distance visual acuity (UDVA).

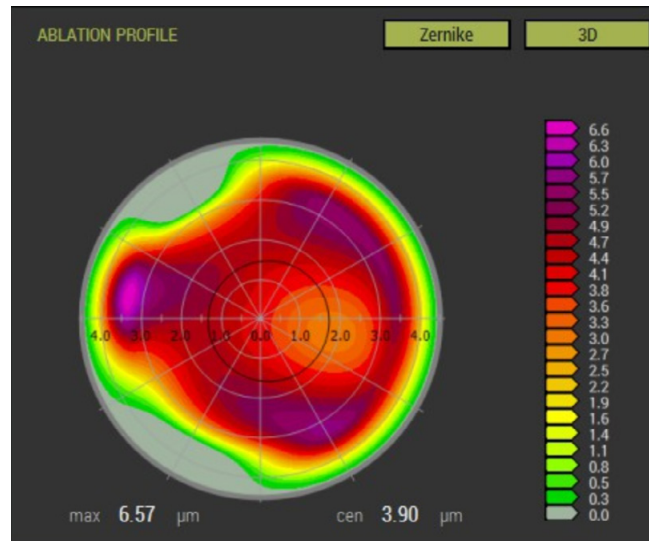
## Why was the Phorcides analytic software created?

Given that so many treatment planning methods have been utilized for topography-guided LASIK, it was clear that a more standardized and objective approach was needed – one based on logic, mathematics, and optical physics. And this led to the development of the Phorcides analytic software. Phorcides was created to provide a definitive treatment calculation to make topography-guided LASIK planning easier and more accurate for surgeons.

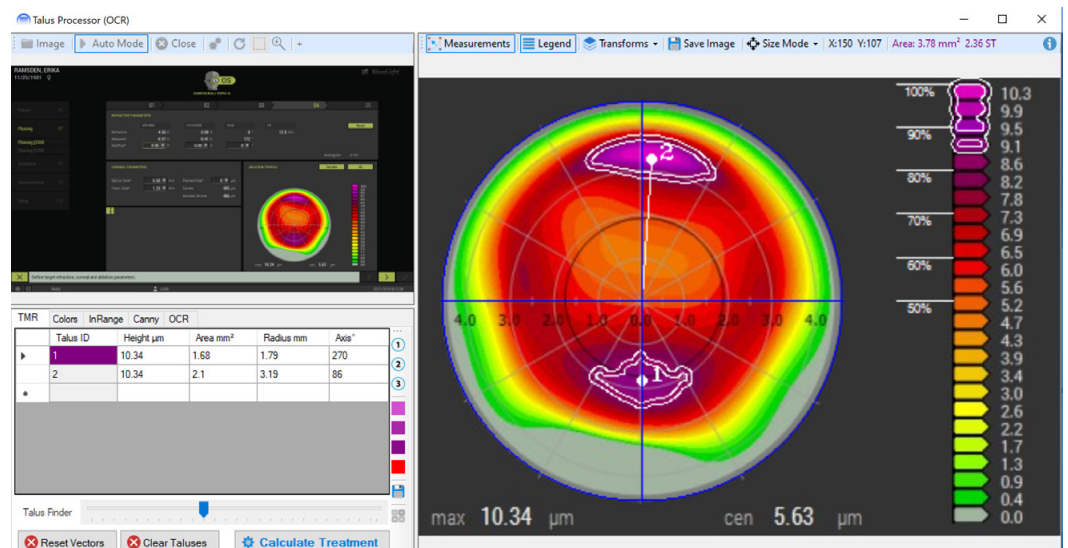
## What is the Phorcides analytic software?

Phorcides is a program that uses geographic imaging software to analyze the anterior topographic profile of an individual's cornea (Figure 1 and 2). It takes into account anterior topographic data from the Placido Disc-based Topolyzer® Vario, along with anterior and posterior corneal astigmatism data from a Scheimpflug topographer. The Phorcides software measures the radius of each topographical feature, or talus, and uses all this information to determine the true anterior corneal astigmatism (Figure 2). The software compiles a series of refractive vectors: one vector for each raised topographical feature on the corneal surface, one for the anterior corneal astigmatism, one for the posterior corneal astigmatism, and one for any internal lenticular astigmatism (Figure 3). Finally, it uses a series of advanced computer algorithms to determine an optimized sphere and cylinder magnitude and orientation for the treatment. Of course, starting with a good manifest refraction and quality topography images are essential for calculating the correct treatment.

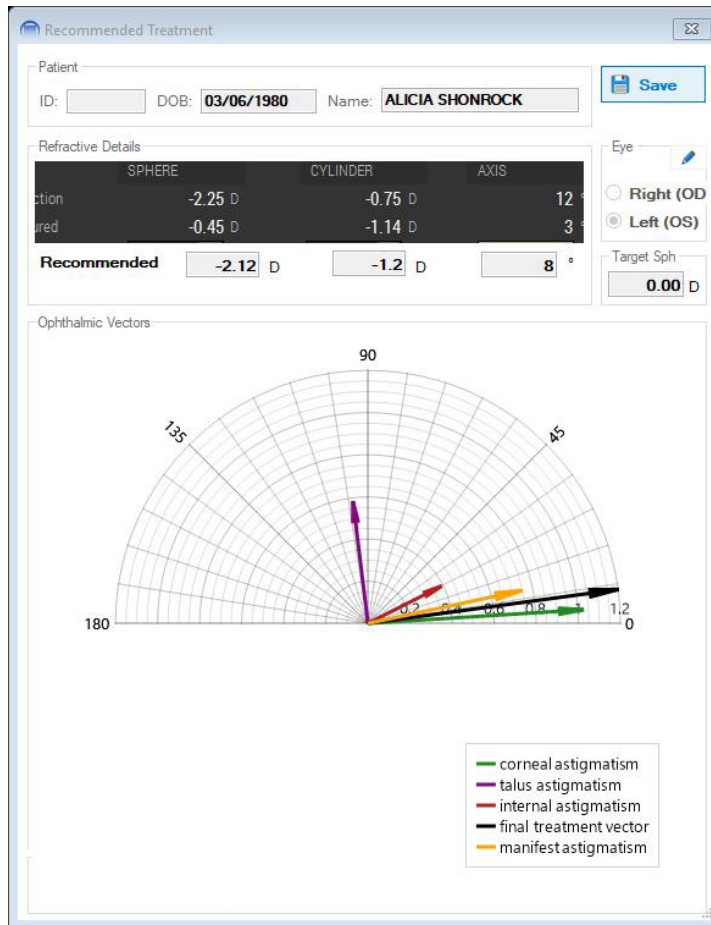
**Figure 1:** Anterior corneal topographic treatment image from the WaveLight® topography guided planning laptop.



**Figure 2:** The Phorcides analytic software uses geographic imaging software (GIS) to analyze the corneal topographic treatment image produced by the WaveLight® topography guided planning laptop. Each talus radius is measured, and its refractive effect is analyzed.



**Figure 3:** The Phorcides analytic software determines the low-order astigmatic vector created by all sources (anterior cornea, posterior cornea and lenticular) and uses vector addition to calculate the final astigmatic vector.



**How does planning topography-guided LASIK treatments with Phorcides software compare to planning treatment with other methods (manifest, TMR, 50 / 50)?**

The Phorcides software uses more data and takes the analysis of each eye further than other methods currently allow. For example, none of the other methods currently take into account posterior corneal astigmatism or internal (lenticular) astigmatism the way that Phorcides does. The other methods also do not use a mathematical model to determine the optical effects of removing topographic irregularities from the cornea. Finally, the Phorcides software removes some of the subjective decision-making required by the other methods (i.e. determining the correct balance between manifest and topography cylinder) and allows for a more objective and calculated approach to treatment.





**Stephen Wexler, MD**  
TLC Laser Eye Center,  
St Louis, MO



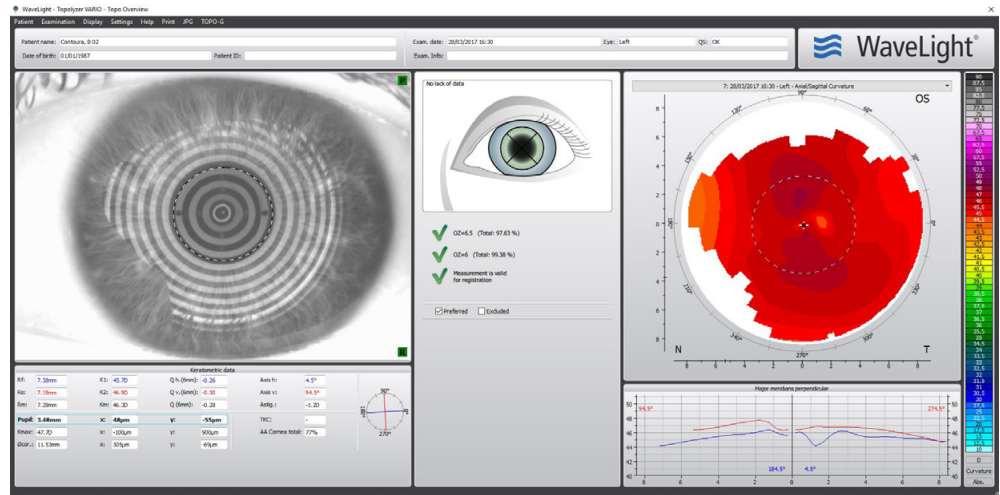
**Doyle Stulting, MD**  
Woolfson Eye Institute,  
Atlanta, GA

**How do you decide if topography-guided LASIK is the right treatment for a patient?**

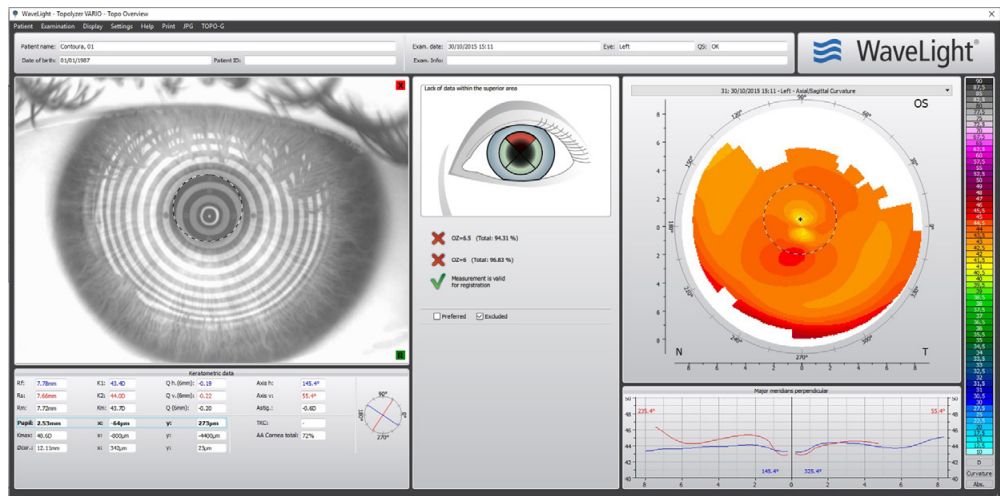
**Dr. Wexler:** I consider using topography-guided LASIK on all my routine refractive surgery patients. My main criterion for using topography-guided LASIK is whether I get good corneal topography measurements or not (Figure 4 and 5). If I get good scans, and Phorclides can calculate a treatment, then I use topography-guided LASIK programmed with Phorclides.

**Dr. Stulting:** I recommend topography-guided LASIK for all refractive surgery patients that we are able to treat with this technology. There are times when I have to opt for a different treatment (e.g. WFO) such as when the refraction is outside of the FDA approved treatment range for WaveLight® topography guided LASIK or when adequate topography scans cannot be obtained. Scans are sometimes difficult in patients with deep-set eyes or difficulty opening their lids. For many of them, these difficulties can be overcome by using an assistant to help with the lids or a change in the position of the head. Ocular surface disease can cause an unstable tear film, which can interfere with the capture of an acceptable corneal topography image (Figure 5). In these cases, it is important to manage the ocular surface disease before performing LASIK.

**Figure 4:** Example of a good quality image with Topolyzer® Vario.



**Figure 5:** Example of a poor quality image with Topolyzer® Vario due to central dryness and upper lid interference.



## How does using the Phorcides software impact your confidence in the final treatment plan for topography-guided LASIK?

**Dr. Wexler:** It is just impossible to look at a higher order aberration map and know exactly how much influence the irregularities will have on the treatment, and I used to struggle with how to incorporate these into the treatment plan. Before Phorcides, I often used a combination of manifest cylinder and corneal cylinder but never really knew if it would be the optimal treatment amount, particularly when there were large disparities between the manifest- and topography-measured astigmatism. Phorcides takes the guesswork out of topography-guided LASIK treatment planning. I am much more confident now with the definitive calculation that it provides! One of the great things about using Phorcides is that we rarely see a flipped axis anymore, whereas we used to see it on occasion with manifest refraction and TMR.

**Dr. Stulting:** Treatment with topography-guided LASIK is state-of-the-art, but Phorcides takes us a step beyond what manifest and topography measured treatment planning can offer. Phorcides not only takes into account the effect of localized aberrations in the anterior topography, but also the posterior corneal surface. It allows calculation and incorporation of internal astigmatism into the treatment plan. This allows for an accurate determination of the low-order astigmatism magnitude and axis needed for treatment planning. With this, I am much more confident that the final calculated result will be the optimal treatment and give my patients the best possible visual outcome.

## What are the differences between the Phorcides analytic software and other nomograms?

**Dr. Wexler:** Phorcides is different than a nomogram in that it provides a calculated treatment strictly based on data from that individual's eye rather than averaged data from other patient eyes. I do keep track of all my outcomes on IBRA and have a sophisticated nomogram based on thousands of eyes. While I do use this to adjust sphere and cylinder for wavefront optimized treatments, I don't need to do this for topography-guided LASIK. I can just go with the Phorcides calculated numbers and know that I will get great results. I still alter my target goals based on age, and Phorcides allows me to easily do that.

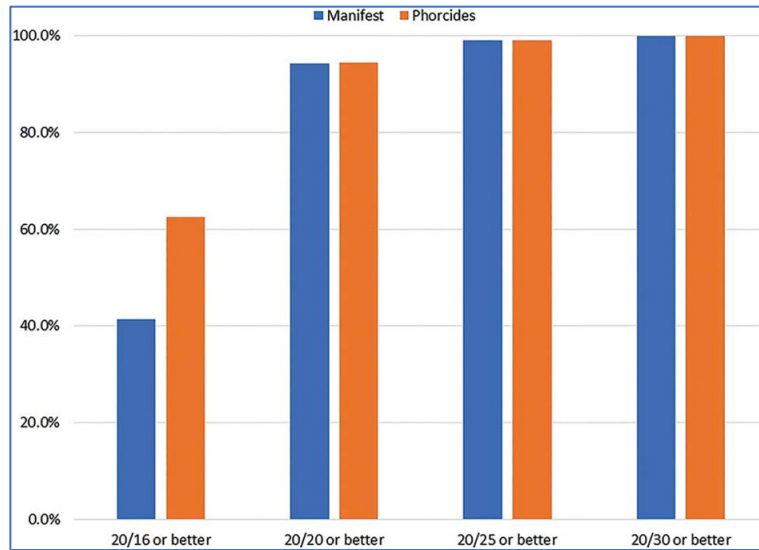
**Dr. Stulting:** Nomograms calculate the average result of past treatments, compare it to the desired outcome, and adjust treatments accordingly. These adjustments are based on average outcomes obtained from large databases. Phorcides, on the other hand, makes corrections in the treatment plan based on factors that are characteristic of the individual, rather than database averages. So Phorcides provides an accurate, individualized plan that nomograms alone cannot provide.

## What does the clinical data show for Phorcides versus manifest / TMR?

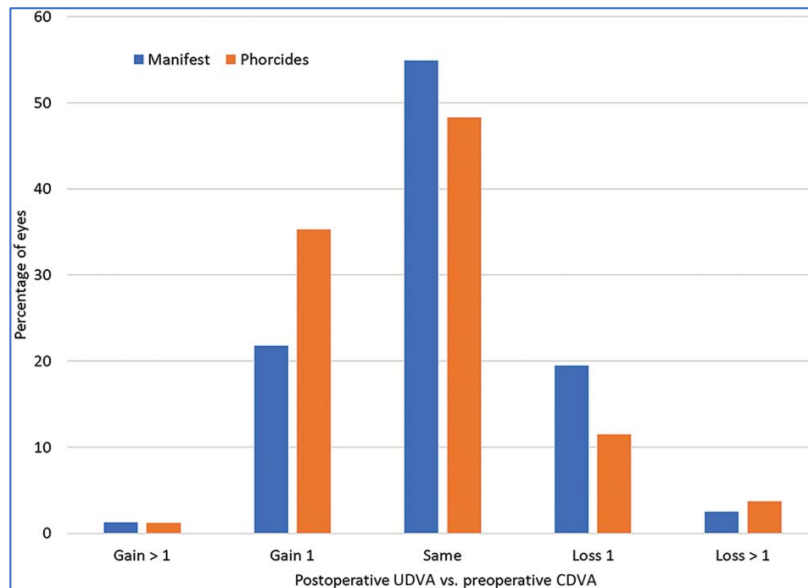
**Dr. Wexler:** Outcomes are similar and speak to the fact that WaveLight® topography guided LASIK is a very effective treatment. However, we just published a retrospective study that showed a higher percentage of patients achieving postoperative 20/15 by planning with Phorcides, rather than the manifest refraction (Figure 6).<sup>1</sup> That study also showed that more patients gained 1 or more lines of UDVA compared to their preoperative corrected distance visual acuity (CDVA) with Phorcides (Figure 7).

**Dr. Stulting:** Along with other users of WaveLight® topography guided LASIK/treatment, we retrospectively studied the actual and calculated refractive cylinder outcomes of topography guided treatments programmed with the manifest refraction, topographically measured refraction (TMR), and Phorcides. This study showed that the best outcomes were obtained with Phorcides.<sup>2</sup> A prospective study is currently underway to confirm these findings and analyze subjective quality of vision obtained with Phorcides.

**Figure 6:** Postoperative uncorrected distance visual acuity (UDVA) by group (n=317 manifest, n=323 Phorcides; p<0.002; X2 test).



**Figure 7:** Difference between the postoperative uncorrected distance visual acuity (UDVA) and preoperative corrected distance visual acuity (CDVA) (n=317 manifest, n=323 Phorcides; p<0.002; X2 test).

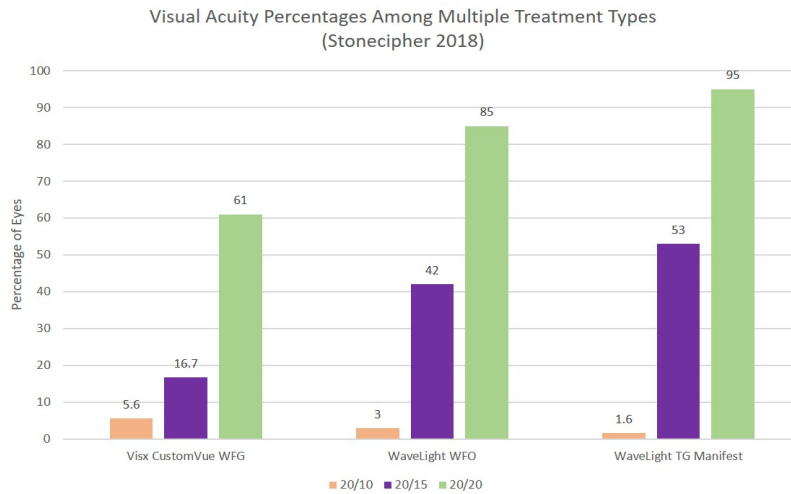


**What does visual acuity data show for Phorcides (or WaveLight® topography guided LASIK in general) versus other treatment options (WFO / WFG)?**

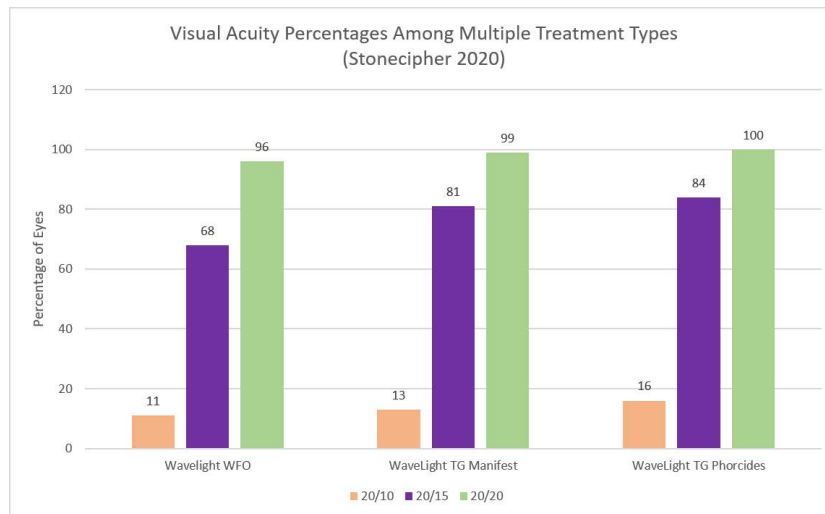
**Dr. Wexler:** Wavefront optimized (WFO) and topography-guided LASIK routinely get great results -especially at the 20/20 level. However, there are two large head-to-head studies that showed a higher percentage of patients achieving 20/15 or better with WaveLight® topography guided treatment versus WFO treatment (Figure 8 & 9).<sup>4,5</sup> Stonecipher (2018)<sup>4</sup> also showed that WaveLight® topography guided treatment allowed for a higher percentage of both 20/20 and 20/15 or better, compared to wavefront-guided (WFG) treatment (Figure 8).

**Dr. Stulting:** While WFO generally provides great outcomes, recent studies have shown that more patients can achieve 20/15 or better with WaveLight® topography guided LASIK (Figure 8 & 9).<sup>4,5</sup> The addition of Phorcides makes the treatment even more accurate with higher rates of 20/15 or better (Figure 6).<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 8:** Postoperative uncorrected distance visual acuity (UDVA) among various treatment types<sup>4</sup> (n=27 WFG; n=430 WaveLight® WFO; n=416 WaveLight® topography guided (TG) manifest).



**Figure 9:** Postoperative uncorrected distance visual acuity (UDVA) among various WaveLight® treatment types<sup>5</sup> (n=788 WFO; n=1027 topography guided (TG) manifest; n=338 TG Phorcides).



**Are there any data that show an effect of topography-guided LASIK on ocular aberrations and quality of vision?**

**Dr. Wexler:** There is a large study by Zhang et al (2019)<sup>6</sup> that showed that total higher order aberrations and coma were significantly lower with WaveLight® topography guided vs WFO at 1 and 6 months postoperatively ( $p < 0.05$ ). There are several other smaller studies with similar findings.<sup>7-9</sup> but more research is needed in this area.

**Dr. Stulting:** The FDA study for WaveLight® topography guided LASIK showed a reduction in total RMS magnitude for 2nd through 5th order corneal aberrations which reflects the overall effect of topography-guided LASIK on corneal irregularities. This study also showed that pre-op visual symptoms of light sensitivity, difficulty with night driving, reading difficulty and glare, significantly improved postoperatively.<sup>10</sup> These data allow us to tell our patients truthfully that the quality of their vision after treatment may be better than it was before treatment with the best glasses that could be prescribed.



**Are there any data to indicate that using the Phorcides software would improve ocular aberrations or quality of vision more than other treatment planning options (manifest, TMR, etc)?**

**Dr. Wexler:** So far, we don't have much data on this for Phorcides. As mentioned earlier, there is improvement in post-op UDVA, compared to the pre-op CDVA, and this may be a result of reduced aberrations producing better visual quality. We are currently starting a prospective study using Phorcides and will be looking at this. So, we will have more data soon.

**Dr. Stulting:** Specific data on aberration profiles and quality of vision specific to Phorcides are currently limited; however, our upcoming prospective study will provide this information.

**What impact does the Phorcides software have on your approach to implementing topography-guided LASIK in your practice)?**

**Dr. Wexler:** It just takes the guess work out of programming the laser. It really helps increase your confidence level because it is easy to use and gives great results. I could not go back to NOT using it! I would recommend Phorcides for anyone using WaveLight® topography guided LASIK.

**Dr. Stulting:** WaveLight® topography guided LASIK, with the addition of the Phorcides software, allows surgeons to feel confident that the calculated cylinder magnitude and axis are the optimal treatment and provides surgeons with the opportunity to give patients better vision than they have ever had.<sup>1,5</sup> Before Phorcides became available, we performed extensive calculations to determine the correct refractive input for treatment planning. We were always concerned that we might make a calculation error and end up with a bad result. I would recommend WaveLight® topography guided LASIK using Phorcides to all other surgeons. I expect those who are dedicated to providing their patients with the best possible outcomes will adopt this technology.

## Conclusion

Topography-guided LASIK, specifically using WaveLight® topography guided treatment with the Phorcides analytic software, allows for a higher percentage of patients to reach 20/15 or better. Phorcides takes into account the effects of not only anterior astigmatism, but also posterior and lenticular astigmatism, where other treatment planning options do not allow for this. Phorcides helps surgeons avoid the need to determine the sphere and cylinder components and, it allows them to feel confident that the calculated result is the optimal treatment plan for each individual patient.

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