

CONTACT LENS PRACTICE IN GHANA; WEARERS DEMOGRAPHY AND CHARACTERISTICS

Summary

Background: Contact lens practice varies per country. Studying the trends allows practitioners to compare their own practices with others around the world.

Purpose: To collect data to document the demography and characteristics of contact lens practice in Ghana.

Method: A retrospective study was carried out in ten (10) major contact lens centers comprising two (2) regions of Ghana, using the clinical records of all the contact lens patients seen at the centre since its inception. Questionnaires were also administered to the contact lens practitioners in those centers. Cross-sectional associations between demographic variables and purpose of wear, wear modality, preferred lens type and type of complications after using contacts were also analysed.

Results: The average age of the contact lens wearers was 28.74years old. Majority of wearers were in the age group of 18-25years with females (62.2%) comprising about two-thirds. In lens type fitting preference, 85.5% (165) of the wearers were fitted with soft lens. RGP 9.8% (19) and hard lenses 11.9% (23) were not commonly fitted. With regards to lens wear modality, 70.5% (136) used daily wear lenses and 11.9% (23) extended wear with monthly replacement (7.7%) as the most common schedule. Majority used contact lenses for visual correction 46.6% (90) and of these 70.0% (63) were myopes. Among contact lens related complications, CLARE 11.9% (23) was the most common followed by GPC 4.1% (8) and microbial keratitis 3.1% (6). Optifree 30.6% (59) and Light Sauflon 29.0% (56) were the commonest lens care products/solutions used.

Lens awareness 39.9% (71) and burning sensation 20.7% (40) were the most common self-reported symptoms with their habitual contact lenses. Significant association was found only between gender and purpose for wearing contact lens ($p=0.001$).

Contact lens practitioners were mainly optometrists between the ages of 26-39 years; 60% having been in contact lens practice for more than 2 years. However, only one practitioner indicated having a specialized contact lens certification. Majority of the practitioners 80% (8) engaged in inventory fitting.

Conclusion: The demographics and characteristics of contact lens wearers in Ghana show many similarities to what has been reported in most developing countries. The study stresses the need to increase the knowledge, awareness and practice of contact lens in Ghana with regards to current trends in the world.



Dr Alex Azuka Ilechie was born and raised in a humble family of educationists. His mother is a retired headmistress and two of his siblings run private primary schools in Nigeria. Dr Alex Ilechie offers more than 2 decades of accomplishment-laden experience in Optometry practice since he earned his Bachelor of optometry degree from the University of Benin, Nigeria in 1985 with a BSc honors in Optometry, followed by a Doctor of Optometry degree from the same university, and a Master of Philosophy degree in Community Health from

the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. Most recently he was awarded a Fellow of the International association of contact lens educators (FIACLE) after successfully passing the fellowship exam. He is currently pursuing his Phd in optometry and visual sciences at the University of Kwazulu in South Africa

The scope of his experience has spanned virtually all aspects of the optometry career including being credited as the brainchild behind the success of the optometry program in University of Cape Coast (UCC), Ghana, lead optometrist in Ghana for Unite for Sight International, USA (2005-2007), President of Voluntary optometry service to humanity in Ghana VOSH/UCC, Senior optometry lecturer with over 20 publications in internationally reputed journals, and have supervised more than 30 doctor of optometry thesis students in 6 batches of optometry graduating class in UCC.

In 2007 he received a grant from Emirates airline to conduct a community outreach program in refugee camps in the Thailand- Burma border. In addition he has presented academic papers at international conferences in the US, the UK, Asia and Ghana. He also serves the university on several boards which include schools of Agric board, school of physical science board and school of social science board.