



Educating the practitioners of the future

'Among the greatest challenges we face as educators is time, and providing large numbers of students with an equal clinical experience. That and money.'

This comment at the Third IACLE World Congress on Contact Lens Education might well have come from any one of more than 100 contact lens educators attending from 30 countries around the world, from Nepal to Poland to Guatemala.

But the speaker was **Judy Perrigin**, chair of the Association of Optometric Contact Lens Educators (AOCLE) and Professor of Optometry at one of the largest schools in the US, at the University of Houston, Texas.

Professor Perrigin's experience highlighted the similarities rather than differences between contact lens teaching worldwide and the need to harness technology to overcome the common challenges that educators face.

Shaping the future

Organised by the International Association of Contact Lens Educators (IACLE), the congress saw educators come together to shape the future of education and learn about the latest in classroom technology.

Support from sponsors Alcon, CooperVision and Johnson & Johnson Vision Care enabled IACLE to organise the event and delegates to attend from each of IACLE's three global regions: Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe/Africa – Middle East. Ten educators from the UK and Ireland were among them.

Industry representatives also took part and collaborated on a business session examining the role of educators in growing global contact lens penetration. IACLE members around the world were able to participate via a live online broadcast.

Teaching technology

Congress chair **Professor Philip Morgan** said increased internet speed and Cloud-based technologies had changed the learning environment dramatically. Morgan's colleague **Ian**

A recent meeting could transform the future for contact lens education around the world, but contact lenses were not on the agenda. **Alison Ewbank** reports on the Third IACLE World Congress, hosted by The University of Manchester



Use of the iPad to 'flip' the classroom was among the technology demonstrated

Miller showed how it was possible to combine several technologies through the Nearpod learning platform to create a 'mobile classroom'. And **Dr Ian Hutt** charted the rise of the MOOC (massive open online course) that had seen the university enrol 75,000 students in 200 countries.

Distinguished Apple Educator **Joe Moretti** demonstrated the use of the iPad to 'flip' the classroom', transform the learning space and create ePub content with interactive elements.

Examples of institutions using 'blended learning' included Aston University, where virtual presentations and narrated lectures are pre-recorded and placed on the Blackboard learning management system.

Students can print up and listen to the lecture before attending an interactive seminar. This allowed them to bring in their own experiences and knowledge to practical sessions, said senior lecturer and IACLE president **Dr Shehzad Naroo**.

Craig Woods, Assistant Professor of Optometry at a new school at Deakin University in Australia, described its strategy: a unique case-based optometry program in which teams of students work together and meet at intervals to review their progress.

Dr Helen Crompton of Old Dominion University Virginia, offered some potential solutions for the future, with virtual and augmented reality devices that could create authentic learning opportunities using computer simulations.

Dr Crompton brought along a humanoid robot to demonstrate how robotics were advancing to become more interactive.

The science of persuasion

Along with technology, a key theme at the World Congress was the role of educators in the business of contact lenses and growing the global contact lens market. The three sponsoring ▶



companies worked closely to deliver the session.

Ian Davies (Johnson & Johnson Vision Care) identified three levers to grow the market and reduce dropout: proactive recommendation, communication (four words: 'I recommend contact lenses') and confidence.

But were topics taught by contact lens educators addressing these critical needs, when analysis of IACLE courses worldwide showed specialist fitting techniques and conditions such as keratoconus were among the most commonly covered?

Davies proposed a 'core curriculum for change' where communication of the benefits of contact lenses was the foundation, and lens handling and product selection were given greater prominence than ocular examination or complications.

Helmer Schweizer (Alcon Vision Care) highlighted the 'and opportunity'. To increase the inflow of wearers, educators needed to generate excitement in their students about contact lenses, emphasise benefits rather than complications and teach them to choose the best lens option – or options – for their patients.



Delegates tried out a variety of virtual and augmented reality devices

Expert in the science of persuasion, **Steve Martin** described the six principles of influence: reciprocity, scarcity, authority, consistency, liking and social proof. Examples of how these principles were applied to contact lens practice might be communicating what patients stood to lose, rather than gain, to supplement lens care instructions, and having them make a written commitment to following the advice.

Social proof research suggested pointing out how many people are

wearing or starting to wear contact lenses might be a more persuasive strategy than saying how few people currently wear them.

Turning point

For Professor Morgan, the World Congress marked a turning point both in his own outlook to technology in teaching and to the role of educators in the future prospects for growth in contact lens prescribing worldwide.

'This meeting will have a profound effect on how contact lens education is delivered and ultimately how contact lenses are prescribed. That matters to everyone involved, from educators to industry right through to the end user, the patient.'

Delegates would seem to agree. Asked whether they would make any changes to the way they teach contact lenses at their institution having participated in the congress, all without exception said they would.

A comment by **Dr Jeff Walline**, associate dean at The Ohio State University College of Optometry, summed up the feelings of many of those attending: 'I loved that this was about education, not contact lenses. It was a completely original meeting.' ●

