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## India's new graduates receive a masterclass in contact lens practice

**Masterclass Optometry is an education initiative to bridge the gap between academic training and clinical practice by exposing new graduates to a world-class learning experience. IACLE member Daksha Kataria reports on its latest event, held in Chennai last month**



In association with SRM University, Masterclass Optometry organized the South India Level Contact Lens Commando program at SRM Medical College in Chennai (30 and 31 October).

Various colleges from around South India participated: Malabar College of Health Education, Thissur; Rayhan College of Optometry, Edappal; Lotus Bausch + Lomb Institute of Optometry, Coimbatore; Bausch + Lomb School of Optometry, Hyderabad; Vinayaka Missions University, Pondicherry; Shri Prakash Institute of Optometry, Chennai; Vasana Institute of Ophthalmology and Research, Chennai; Sri Jayendra Saraswathi Institute of Optometry, Chennai; and SRM University, Chennai.

The total number of participants was around 275. Most were third and fourth-year students of optometry with a few ophthalmology residents. The program was one of its kind because the Masterclass team dealt with practical issues to give the young aspiring minds knowledge about how to handle patients in their clinical practice.



The program was introduced by **Dr Ravi Kumar**, Professor and Head of Ophthalmology at the SRM Medical College, who welcomed dignitaries from SRM, speakers for the day and the enthusiastic participants.

'Masterclass' was introduced to the audience by Assistant Professor in Optometry **Divya S** and lecturer **Anshika Shah** who introduced the Masterclass team: FIACLE **Yeshwant Saoji** (Senior Optometrist, Saoji Vision Care, Nagpur) and **Nilesh Thite** (IACLE Director of Educational Programs).

The program was inaugurated by **Dr James Pandian** (Director Medical Planning, SRM University), after which **Dr Sundaram A** (Dean – Medical, SRM Medical College), addressed the gathering about the importance of optometrists. He praised the dynamic optometry team at SRM for having regular updates. The organizing committee consisted of six young and energetic women, who took care of planning and executing the entire event, with the help of students and members of the ophthalmology department.

## Back to basics

The Contact Lens Commando program started with a recap of the basics of contact lenses by **Sakunthala P. Yeshwant Saoji** outlined why it is important to know more about contact lenses and to get into fitting them. When in practice, there would be situations in which we would have to handle patients with different concerns and limitations, said Yeshwant. He later spoke about how to communicate positively with patients and how to win them over.



**Nilesh Thite** cleared up a few general misconceptions and myths about contact lenses and discussed ways to handle patient concerns. Positive communication, body language, and how to convince a patient, was made easy to understand by having a video roleplay.

The post-lunch session, with video demonstrations, was on soft lens fitting characteristics. Students were given pointers on which characteristic to rely more on, and the common misleading findings. When dispensing contact lenses to a patient, the proper care regimen also needs to be taught and emphasized. How we decide which is the ideal solution – and what makes a solution multipurpose – was dealt with in an interesting way by Nilesh. The need for follow-up and a suggested protocol, what questions should be asked and what to look for while examining an established wearer were also covered. The need for toric soft lenses, the challenge of maintaining the axis using stabilization techniques and the various methods available were dealt with in detail.

The Masterclass Team was impressed with the way the students answered their questions on the basics with confidence and clarity. The fitting of toric lenses could not be made easier, with around 90 per cent success rate with the first fit. But again, all is not perfect. Yeshwant used case studies to describe how to go about troubleshooting if the lens shows rotation and the patient is not happy with the vision.

## Start with a song

The second day of the program started with an energetic song on optometry composed by Masterclass Optometry! The day progressed with the basics of silicone hydrogels, the need for these materials, USAN nomenclature and proposed FDA group, covered in detail by **Daksha Jain Soni** (Lecturer-Optometry, SRM Medical College).

Nilesh reviewed material properties, similarities and differences compared to hydrogels, and any special considerations when fitting. How to convince a patient that these are the best lenses available to date, and make the experience a good one for the patient was discussed by Yeshwant using real-life examples.

Different kinds of people from different walks of life would like to try contact lenses, all of whom will eventually require presbyopic correction. The current scenario of multifocal practice was discussed by Yeshwant, while Nilesh described the various designs and how to go about fitting patients – setting realistic expectations and giving them time to adapt to the lenses. Specialty lenses were also covered.

The afternoon session saw a presentation on cutting-edge technology in contact lenses by Nilesh, after which the much-awaited panel discussion began. The panel was an elite (literally) panel with **PS Rekhi** (Director, Spectrum Eye Care, Chennai), **Dr Rajeswari Mahadevan** (Head of Contact Lens Department, Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai) **Yeshwant Saoji** and **Sakunthala P.** It was moderated by **Nilesh Thite** and

**Daksha Jain Soni.** The discussion started with each panelist taking the audience through their journey in contact lens field. Students then actively interacted with the panelist on varied topics such as counterfeit products and online sale of contact lenses.

The program came to an end with feedback from the students. Altogether it was an excellent program by the Masterclass team, organized by SRM University. A vote of thanks was delivered by **C Vijayalakshmi** (Lecturer- Optometry, SRM University). He extended thanks to the team who – true to their commitment to education – did not charge a professional fee, and to the SRM Management who hosted the event and gave free accommodation to about 160 students. Special thanks to **Ms Sabiha** (Tutor- Optometry, SRM University) who made sure that all other arrangements were well co-ordinated. The program was a huge success among the students as they were able to interact with giants in the



contact lens field.