

Keeping educators at the top of their game

Communicating with students and assessing their skills was on the timetable as contact lens educators gathered in Liverpool for a one-day meeting organised jointly by IACLE and British Universities Committee of Contact Lens Educators. Alison Ewbank reports



On the day that the UK's students turned out in force to vote in the General Election, 80 contact lens educators and clinic supervisors from universities and colleges in the UK and Ireland – along with early-stage researchers and IACLE members from around the world – attended IACLE/BUCCLE Education Day (8 June). The event was timed to precede the 40th British Contact Lens Association Clinical Conference taking place in Liverpool (9-11 June).

Key themes for the day were effective communication with students and how to assess their clinical skills. BUCCLE Chair **Neil Retallic** said the aim was to help educators stay at the top of their game and to share best practice in contact lens education.



Early-stage researchers from the European Dry Eye Network (EDEN) project were among the delegates, and later presented their studies on the opening day of the BCCLA Conference

Generational communication

IACLE Vice President **Dr Gina Sorbara** (University of Waterloo, Canada) described the differences between Millennials – born from the 1990s to the present day – and the Baby Boomers (1946-64), Generation X (1965-77) and Generation Y (1977-90s). Millennials grew up with the internet and social media, and were raised to ask questions and get involved since they experienced very collaborative environments at home.

For these students it was all about teamwork, said Gina. They monitored their achievements (especially on social media) and wanted to be number one in the team. In sports, they came from the ‘everyone wins’ world and could often be *too* collaborative. ‘We have to help them think independently and overcome their sense of entitlement and reliance on technology, or they will approach work in the same way as they approach learning,’ she said.



Active learning environments

Millennials wanted the opportunity to share their voice and to be heard. When challenged they wanted specific answers and they liked to collaborate with their peers before making decisions. These students needed active learning environments, such as a ‘flipped classroom’ where they controlled some elements of the time, place, path or pace of their education.

Give them group work and use technology but also encourage them to work independently and reward it in order to encourage self-esteem, Gina advised. Provide a clear roadmap, spelling out the final deliverables, and allow them to check in with you regularly. Millennials valued choice and customisation: ‘everything made just for them’.

Evidence-based learning was a strong theme throughout Education Day. Students and educators had a responsibility to the patient to provide the most up-to-date care, said Gina. Using the evidence base to manage cases, and recognising a pattern in their patients through clinical experience, must be encouraged. Get students to present a critically appraised topic (CAT) in groups to their peers.

The sandwich approach

Delivering feedback to this generation was very difficult. It was important to show excitement about their improvement week to week, comment constructively and give immediate feedback with specific examples. One approach was to sandwich any negative feedback between a positive introduction and final motivating comments. ‘Foremost, students want to be happy in their career choice so you should relay the benefits to them,’ Gina concluded.



Pictured (l-r) are BUCCLE Chair Neil Retallic, IACLE’s EMEA Regional President Judith Morris (Chair for the day) and IACLE President Dr Shehzad Naroo

Virtual learning

‘Turning the classroom on its head’ was the topic for IACLE President **Dr Shehzad Naroo** (Aston University, UK), who described how a mix of online lectures, face-to-face teaching and digital media could be combined to provide blended learning. ‘It’s all about using time effectively,’ he said. At Aston, students had virtual presentations as well seminars, lectures, practicals and clinics. Shehzad demonstrated various types of recording software (eg Adobe Presenter, Panopto) and virtual

learning environments (eg Blackboard, WebCT, Moodle), and showed how Socrative Quiz could be used to run exams or quizzes then record and report results.



Assessing core competencies

Arnold Cochrane (Ulster University, UK, pictured left) and **Dr Graham Mouat** (University of Bradford, UK) led a workshop discussion on different approaches taken to assessing undergraduate core competencies in contact lenses, as was required by the UK regulatory body the General Optical Council.

At Bradford, competencies were assessed in routine clinics, divided between fit, aftercare and collection appointments, said Graham. At Ulster, core skills

were signed off after each patient episode or scenario using an online education management system (Meditrek) checklist, which was simpler for the educator and for the student, said Arnold.

After the facilitated discussion that followed, each group reported back on how skills were assessed at their institutions. Although regulation of contact lens practice varied from country to country, there were some issues in common, said **Judith Morris**, IACLE's EMEA Regional President. 'That's what IACLE is about – we have to educate then legislate,' she added. IACLE also needed to develop more resources for teaching in clinics, as well as supporting theoretical learning. Another problem common to many institutions was recruiting enough patients, and supervisors, for their clinics.

From evidence to practice

For **Professor James Wolffsohn** (Aston University) there were many sources of expertise available to merge evidence-based teaching into clinical practice, such as databases, journals, apps, websites and newsletters, conferences and postgraduate courses. The reality was that educators still told students 'This is what I was taught at university', 'I find this works for me' or 'I always do it this way!'



'There's far too much of that happening,' said James. 'Do we want optometry to stay as a university degree and take it seriously or are we prepared for it become an apprenticeship?' With reference to recent studies, he showed how the grading/recording of clinical signs and symptoms could be evidence based, adding 'It's really important we move forward on this.'

Professor James Wolffsohn with Renee Reeder of Illinois College of Optometry, USA

Co-presenter **Dr Jennifer Craig** (University of Auckland, New Zealand) urged delegates to apply the same principle to dry eye diagnosis/management, and use the evidence base soon to be available in the DEWS II Report, compiled by 150 leading authorities for the Tear Film & Ocular Surface Society (TFOS). 'If we don't all stick to the same story, we'll be doing the profession a disservice,' she said.

IACLE Treasurer **Dr Etty Bitton** (University of Montreal, Canada) reviewed some of the latest resources available to IACLE members (see panel), including a Dry Eye and Contact Lenses module, in light of DEWS II, that would complete the New IACLE Contact Lens Course, and the new monthly Research Updates of key studies published in peer-reviewed journals.

Neil Retallic and **Dr Shehzad Naroo** described the benefits of membership of their respective organisations and outlined how those with a passion for contact lenses – whether in education or industry – could be recognised through Fellowship of the BCLA and IACLE.

LATEST IACLE RESOURCES

Fully updated and revised [New IACLE Contact Lens Course](#)

Thirty PowerPoint lectures in five modules by the world's leading CL authorities

Dry Eye and CLs lecture based on the DEWS II Report, and module on Myopia and its Management

To be added to the New ICLC in September 2017

NEW for this year: [Research Update](#)

Monthly summaries of key papers published in the peer-reviewed literature

PLUS Next IACLE Fellowship Exam to be held in November 2017, deadline for registration 30 June

Learning takes AGES

To end the day, business psychologist **Andy Cole** (Aston University, pictured below right) led an interactive session with a team exercise, the principles of which could be applied to teaching situations. He described the AGES approach to teaching and learning:

- **Attention:** maintain a single focus and give complete, undivided attention
- **Generation:** listening isn't enough – do something to make it meaningful and to generate new insights
- **Emotion:** strong emotions evoke strong memories, whether positive or negative
- **Spacing:** growing memory requires breaks between learning – 'sleep on it!'

The difference between high and average performance was cumulative practice, said Andy. 'Believe in practice rather than talent – look for drive and tenacity since skills can be taught.'



- Visit the IACLE website [here](#) for more information from Education Day and use Member Login [here](#) to access some of the Education Day presentations, under Contributed Resources – Presentations/Lectures.