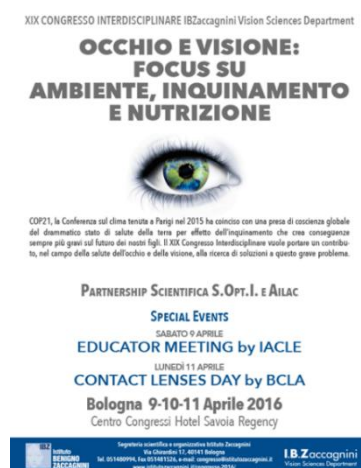


April 2016

## IACLE holds first meeting in Italy under new partnership

Collaboration between the International Association of Contact Lens Educators, the British Contact Lens Association and two Italian professional organisations led to a successful meeting in Bologna with nearly 600 delegates. Dr Shehzad Naroo reports



Istituto Benigno Zaccagnini (IBZ) held its annual interdisciplinary optical congress at the Savoia Regency Hotel in Bologna, Italy in April and this year was the biggest meeting to date. This was the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual IBZ Congress and the theme was 'Eye and Vision: Focus on Environment, Pollution and Nutrition'.

This year marked special new collaborative partnerships for the IBZ Congress as IACLE and the British Contact Lens Association (BCLA) held sessions at the meeting.

The other two partners in the Congress were the Società Optometrica Italiana (SOPTI) and Accademia Italiana Lenti a Contatto (AILAC).

The Congress was attended by nearly 600 people, which included optometrists, opticians, students and others related to the optical industry. **Dr Shehzad Naroo** (IACLE President) and **Professor James Wolffsohn** (BCLA Academic Committee chair) were the invited international speakers.

### Biennial meetings

The main days of the Congress were Sunday 10 April and Monday 11 April, but on Saturday 9 April there was a specially arranged IACLE Educators' Meeting, chaired by Dr Naroo.

Around 100 educators had been identified who work in colleges, universities or for the optical industry in Italy and have a role in contact lens education. This group of educators were invited and around 40 of them attended.

The session started with an overview of IACLE by Dr Naroo including details of the IACLE strategic initiatives, regional updates and future plans. This was followed by an open discussion of the needs of educators in Italy. It was considered useful to have these types of interactive educator meetings and it was decided to hold one each year in the spring time at the IBZ Congress in Bologna and also hold one additional meeting in the autumn, possibly at the SOPTI congress in September 2016.



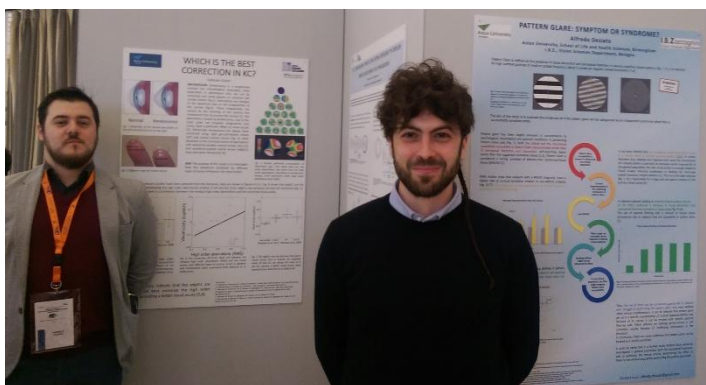
This was the first time IACLE had an official members' meeting in Italy and it proved to be very successful. **Giorgio Righetti** generously offered the help of his institution (IBZ) with translation of IACLE material, including slides, to aid Italian educators in the future. This was very timely since IACLE is in the process of launching a completely revised and updated version of the IACLE Contact Lens Course, the New ICLC.



### Topics for discussion

The first main day of the Congress, Sunday, started with a brief introduction and welcome by Giorgio Righetti on behalf of IBZ (the conference host), Dr Naroo on behalf of IACLE, Professor Wolffsohn on behalf of the BCLA, and **Professor Luigi Lupelli** (pictured left) on behalf of AILAC and Mauro Frisani of SOPTI.

Then followed the lecture presentations including talks on risks to the eye from the electromagnetic spectrum, circadian rhythm and myopia, sports vision, environmental impact on refraction, activities that can induce myopia, visual stress, dry eyes, ocular nutrition and prevention of age-related macular degeneration and cataract.



Some of the presenters of talks and posters were students at IBZ and students of Aston University on the collaborative BSc programme with IBZ, including **Gabriele Civiero** (left) and **Alfredo Desiato** (right).

The Congress continued on Sunday with a round-table discussion chaired by Luigi Lupelli and with panellists Dr Naroo, Professor Wolffsohn, **Pietro**

**Gheller, Anto Rossetti, Paolo Palumbo, Francesco Sala, Mauro Frisani and Salvatore Pintus**. The discussion was around the 'Correction of presbyopia using multifocal contact lenses'.

Among the issues discussed were that contact lens wear was less popular in older patients and dropouts seemed to be higher among older patients. The panel also discussed monovision, and the importance of checking pupil size and ocular dominance, but agreed that ultimately practitioners needed the confidence to get these lenses onto their patients' eyes so that they would embrace the benefits of these products.

At the end of the session Dr Naroo and Professor Wolffsohn held a BCLA Fellowship *viva* for Francesco Sala, who was successful in gaining his FBCLA. He was awarded his FBCLA certificate and badge at the Congress gala dinner that was held that evening. Also, graduates of the Optician's diploma of IBZ were awarded their certificates that evening so there were many reasons for celebrations.

### Contact lens day

Monday was the last day of the Congress and was themed as the contact lens day with sessions by the BCLA and IACLE. Presentations included specialist gas permeable lenses, scleral lenses, cross linking for keratoconus and tear ferning. After lunch there were numerous small group workshops but these were preceded by the final event in the main hall which was another round-table discussion. This discussion was very topical for delegates and around the theme of the 'Role of optometrists in the Italian healthcare system'.

Dr Naroo started the session with details of how optometrists worked in the UK. The traditional business model is built around selling spectacles and the service is subsidised by the retail side. That,

however, was changing over recent years with many UK optometrists now engaging in enhanced services and shared care schemes as some ophthalmic care is being moved out of hospitals and fund holders realise that optometrists have the skills and offer an efficient option. This was particularly interesting for Italian optometrists as they are currently trying to gain recognition for their profession.

Professor Luigi Lupelli told the audience that in 1990 he was interviewed by the UK optical press and he was asked the question, 'When will optometry be recognised in Italy?' to which he optimistically replied, 'In two years!' Although that did not happen it must be said that the future does look bright in Italy for optometry.

There are more collaborations with international partners, there are more optometrists with higher qualifications and degrees, and the presence of IACLE and the BCLA at this Congress as official partners helped raise the profile of the event, especially as future plans include further collaborations with this Congress.