

CONFERENCE

Keeping educators on top of their game

Communicating with students was on the timetable at a one-day meeting in Liverpool for contact lens educators and there was useful information to apply in practice too. **Alison Ewbank** reports

On the day students turned out in force to vote in the general election, 80 professors, lecturers and clinic supervisors from universities and colleges in the UK and Ireland – along with young researchers and IACLE members from around the world – attended IACLE/BUCCLE Education Day.

Organised by the International Association of Contact Lens Educators (IACLE) and British Universities Committee of Contact Lens Educators (BUCCLE), the meeting was timed to precede the 40th British Contact Lens Association Clinical Conference in Liverpool on June 9-11.

Key themes for the day were effective communication with students and assessing their clinical skills. BUCCLE chair Neil Retallic said the aim was to help educators stay at the top of their game and share best practice. There was useful information on dealing with Millennials and on evidence-based learning that could apply in practice.

THE GENERATION GAME

IACLE vice-president Dr Gina Sorbara (University of Waterloo, Canada) described the differences between Millennials – born from the 1990s onwards – and Baby Boomers (1946-64), Generation X (1965-77) and Generation Y (1977-90s).

Millennials grew up with the internet and social media. They were raised to ask questions and get involved since they experienced collaborative environments at home.

'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



Eighty educators attended IACLE/BUCCLE Education Day

they approach learning,' she said.

Millennials wanted the opportunity to share their voice. They wanted specific answers and liked to collaborate with their peers before making decisions. These students needed active learning environments, such as blended learning, where they controlled 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, Dr Sorbara advised.

Students and educators – like practitioners – had a responsibility to the patient to provide the most up-to-date care. Using the evidence base to manage cases and recognising a pattern in patients through clinical experience should be encouraged.

'Foremost, students want to be happy in their career choice so you should relay the benefits to them,' she added.

CORE COMPETENCIES

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

At Bradford, competencies were assessed in routine clinics, divided between fit, aftercare and collection appointments, said Dr Mouat. At Ulster, core skills were signed off after each patient episode or scenario using an online system, said Cochrane.

Although regulation of contact lens practice varied from country to country, there were some issues in common, argued chair Judith Morris, IACLE's EAME regional president, who said: 'That's what IACLE is about – we have to educate then legislate.'

FROM EVIDENCE TO PRACTICE

For Professor James Wolffsohn (Aston University) many sources of expertise were available to merge evidence-based teaching into clinical practice, such as databases, journals, apps, websites, 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 Professor Wolffsohn. 'Do we want optometry to stay as a university degree and take it seriously or are we prepared for it to become an apprenticeship?' With reference to recent studies, he showed how the grading/recording of clinical signs and symptoms could be evidence based.

NEW RESOURCES

Co-presenter Dr Jennifer Craig (University of Auckland, New Zealand) urged delegates to apply the same principle to dry eye



BUCCLE chair Neil Retallic, IACLE EMEA Regional President Judith Morris (chair for the day) and IACLE president Dr Shehzad Naroo

diagnosis/management, and use the new DEWS II Report. '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 the latest resources available to IACLE members, 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 IACLE president Dr Shehzad Naroo described the benefits of membership of their respective organisations, and Fellowship of BCLA and IACLE.

LEARNING TAKES AGES

To end the day, business psychologist Andy Cole (Aston University) led an interactive session in which he described the AGES approach to teaching and learning:

- Attention: maintain a single focus and give complete, undivided attention
- Generation: listening is not 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 Cole. 'Believe in practice rather than talent – look for drive and tenacity since skills can be taught.' ●

- www.iacle.org and www.bcla.org.uk.