

EVENT REPORT



Force Students of the Year, Laura Valencia (centre) and Pablo Arlanzón, with (l-r) CooperVision Iberia's Professional Services Consultant Sonia Devesa, Universidad de Valladolid lecturer Dr María Jesús González and judge Elena García Rubio

Force: the final frontier

The sixth Force Student of the Year final was the largest yet, with teams from outside Europe taking part for the first time. *Optician* reports on how CooperVision is continuing to drive this unique competition forward

Spain may only have managed 23rd place in this year's Eurovision Song Contest – just one place above the UK – but the same night in Budapest it was a Spanish team that took the top slot in the final of another major international competition.

Force (Future Ocular Research Creativity Event) is an annual competition pitching the very best optometry students from colleges and universities against each other. The aim is to inspire students to strive for excellence in their studies and encourage them to develop their professional knowledge base and contacts, to benefit their future careers.

Winners of the national and regional events came together on May 12 for the Force final at Coopervision's Centre of Innovation in Budapest, Hungary. The final provides an opportunity to see

innovative contact lens manufacturing at the company's production facility and network with colleagues, as well as compete for the title Force Student of the Year.



Israel's Yara Jabali, left, and Malaki Mattar take a tour of the Coopervision factory

COMING TOGETHER

This year, the first students from outside Europe took part in the final, with teams from India and Israel joining Force. Bulgaria also participated for the first time. With 11 countries represented, the 2018 final was the largest yet.

Judging the projects were researchers and clinicians Pascale Dauthuille (President of the Association Française des Experts en Lentilles de Contact, France), Elena García Rubio (Instituto Nacional de Optometría, Madrid, Spain) and Dr Eef van der Worp (Eye-Contact-Lens, Amsterdam, the Netherlands), along with panel chairman Professor James Wolffsohn (Aston University, UK).

Force Student of the Year 2017, Sara Picarazzi from Italy, and Alexandre Meslé, the French finalist in the first-ever European competition, returned to describe their experiences since taking

part. Both have recently joined Coopervision in professional services roles. Also attending was Karl Aberdeen, now professional development manager for Africa and Central Europe, and founder of the Student Summit – forerunner of Force – in the UK.

SHAPING THE FUTURE

Commenting on this year's event, Professor Wolffsohn said: 'Once again Coopervision's Force competition brought together some top university students to present their evidence-based practical research findings. With teams from India, Bulgaria and Israel for the first time, as well as regional and country finalists from across Europe, the competition was tough and the networking uptake fantastic.'

'This unique opportunity for optometry students is exceptional and I would strongly encourage even more universities to put forward their best student-led contact lens or anterior eye focused research projects next year.'

'Past winners have gone on to higher level research and industry positions, so the competition really does change lives and is delivering the key opinion leaders and profession shapers of the future.'

TACKLING HOT TOPICS

Entrants to the competition are invited to conduct a six- to eight-week research project – a clinical trial, clinical review paper or case report – and are judged for the evidence for and importance of the project, and the quality and clarity of presentation.

Each team has 15 minutes to present their research and a further 15 minutes to defend their work in front of a panel of judges and peers. After their presentations

The winning project

The Iberian team fitted eight contact lens wearers aged 18 to 28 years with the Biofinity Energys and Biofinity monthly lenses in a random order and masked to both subject and investigator. All subjects were experienced contact lens users who reported using electronic devices with their lenses at least three days a week and three hours per day.

Ocular symptoms were recorded with the CLDEQ-8 questionnaire and visual analogue scales. CVS symptoms were assessed using the validated Computer Vision Scale (CVSS17)

developed by the Complutense University of Madrid.

The clinical performance of the two lenses was similar in these young, healthy subjects without CVS symptoms. The exception was for logMAR acuity and non-invasive tear break-up time, where there was a slight decrease with Energys, although these differences did not appear to be clinically relevant.

Further studies were needed with a larger sample size and in subjects with CVS symptoms.



Each team is interviewed on camera after their presentation

the teams are interviewed on camera about their experiences of taking part and their future careers.

Topical themes this year were ocular symptoms experienced with computer screen use, and the effectiveness of myopia management strategies.

Two teams had identified gaps in understanding in their home countries – the prevalence of Computer Vision Syndrome in a Czech population, and complications and compliance in contact lens wearers

buying lenses over-the-counter in Israel – then addressed these issues in their projects.

REWARDING THE WINNERS

Overall winners were the team representing Iberia, Laura Valencia and Pablo Arlanzón from the Universidad de Valladolid, Spain. Supervised by Dr Alberto López and Cristina Arroyo, they had evaluated symptoms, visual function and clinical signs of Computer Vision Syndrome (see panel).

Laura and Pablo are awarded the title Force Student of the Year and receive a full delegate package, including travel and accommodation, to attend an international contact lens meeting.

Ludivine Willmann, from the Institut Supérieur d'Optique (ISO) Nantes, France took second place for her study of blink rate and visual comfort during activities on computer screens in patients wearing hydrogel and silicone hydrogel contact lenses. And Nicole Tamagnini of the →



Coopervision's Centre for Innovation hosted teams from 11 countries including the first students from outside Europe

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Glasgow students James Bennett, left, and Ross Adamson were joined by supervisor Dr Nadia Northway

Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italy was awarded third place for her research into peripheral retina image quality after myopic orthokeratology. Jude Menezes from India and Maxim Yanev from Bulgaria received special commendations from the judges for their stage presence.

OPENING EYES TO RESEARCH

UK finalists James Bennett and Ross Adamson, from Glasgow Caledonian University took a different approach, with their evaluation of how optical penalisation could be utilised to manage amblyopia and avoid unsightly patch occlusion.

Their study was supervised by optometrists and orthoptists, Dr Nadia Northway, Dr Glyn Walsh and Claudine Wallace.

'The Force event is a fantastic opportunity to meet people from other countries and get

different viewpoints,' said Ross, and he thanked Coopervision for providing the chance to take part. 'I'd say to other students interested in taking part, go for it – give it your all!'

For James, being part of Force would have a good effect on his future career. 'It's opened my eyes to how diverse optometry can be, and how many different aspects you can go in to, in terms of research,' he said.

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

The winners received their certificates from Professor Wolffsohn and Coopervision's professional marketing manager Europe, Amanda Bogers, at a celebration dinner.

Professor Wolffsohn said the standard of this year's final had been very high and the decision was close. Laura and Pablo were a 'well-practised double act', delivering the results of their randomised controlled trial in a clear presentation and answering questions effectively.

'For us Force has been a great experience,' said Laura. 'It's allowed us to meet new people and open up new opportunities for our careers. We've also met people who are very influential in optometry, and may be able to help us in future.' And Pablo added: 'Force has given us the opportunity to present our work in front of an international audience and develop our presentation skills.'

As this year's competition draws to a close, the search for the Force Student of the Year 2019 will soon begin. 'This has been a great year for Force. Next year we want to build on six years of success to give even more students the chance to step up to the stage,' said Bogers.

• For more information on Force and how to enter, contact Coopervision professional services or visit www.coopervision-force.com.

TEAMS AND TOPICS

- Maxim Yanev, Varna Medical University, Bulgaria
Supervisor: Professor Christina Grupcheva
Congenital colour vision defects – can we solve the problem utilising the X-Chrom contact lenses?
- Anna Havelková, Faculty of Biomedical Engineering, Kladno, Czech Republic
Supervisor: Tomáš Dobřenský
Computer Vision Syndrome – severity and prevalence in Czech population, single-blind study of two types of contact lenses
- Ludvine Willmann, Institut Supérieur d'Optique (ISO) Nantes, France
Supervisor: Brigitte Couture
Blink rate and visual comfort in activity on computer screen equipped with soft hydrogel contact lenses vs soft silicone hydrogel contact lenses
- Veronika Éva Horváth, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary
Supervisor: Dr Beáta Tapasztó
Orthokeratology in myopia control
- Jude Menezes, Elite School of Optometry Unit of Medical Research Foundation, Chennai, India
Supervisors: Dr Rajeswari Mahadevan and Rinu Thomas
Success of soft contact lens market: how can new techniques, test and instruments help?
- Yara Jabali and Malaki Mattar, Hadassah Academic College, Jerusalem, Israel
Supervisors: Liat Gantz and Eyal Gal
Complications and compliance with over-the-counter contact lenses versus fitted contact lens wearers
- Nicole Tamagnini, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italy
Supervisor: Professor Antonio Calossi
The peripheral retina image quality after myopic orthokeratology
- Magdalena Zaworska, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland
Supervisor: Professor Richard Naskręcki
Utility of cryo-SEM method to study silicone hydrogel contact lenses structure
- Laura Valencia and Pablo Arlanzón, Universidad de Valladolid, Spain
Supervisors: Dr Alberto López and Cristina Arroyo
Evaluation of Computer Vision Syndrome with Biofinity Energys contact lenses
- Nikolina Olson and Anna Eriksson, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden
Supervisor: Dr Anna Lindskoog-Pettersson
Effects of multifocal contact lenses on ocular aberrations
- James Bennett and Ross Adamson, Glasgow Caledonian University, UK
Supervisors: Dr Nadia Northway, Dr Glyn Walsh, Claudine Wallace
Advancing amblyopia care with contact lenses



Chair of the judges Professor James Wolffsohn described Force as a 'unique opportunity'