

IACLE Arabic Webinar Series Report



IACLE conducted a series of webinars in Arabic for a period of four weeks which were a great success. On average, there was a total attendance of 50; 16-18 members on Zoom and 32-35 educators, students and practitioners tuned into the livestream via Facebook. With very few contact lens educators in the region and a varying scope of contact lens practice, the webinars provided an opportunity for the Middle East contact lens community to meet and discuss matters relevant to the region.

Daddi Fadel, speaking from Rome, was first to present in the IACLE Middle East webinars. She spoke on 'Myopia management: why and how?'. In some countries, the growing prevalence of myopia has reached epidemic levels, requiring an urgent need for a new management approach. Investing in public and parental education on the benefits of myopia management is a key factor for the feasibility of the treatment. **Ms Fadel** explained that myopia management strategies may be grouped into three main categories: optical, pharmacological, and environmental. Optical interventions include the use of spectacles and contact lenses. Different contact lens modalities may be adopted including single vision soft contact lenses, soft multifocal lenses, and ortho-k lenses. Topical atropine has dominated both clinical trials and clinical practice and is currently widely used. The environmental approach consists of encouraging the outdoor activities and achieving light levels indoors comparable with those outdoors, and the adequate assumption of vitamin D. Her final take home message was that no one strategy appears to be effective in all individuals, so eye care professionals must practice different methods to increase the rate of success of the treatment. At the end of the session, educator attendees were interested in how to integrate myopia management in their teaching syllabus, and the possibility of establishing a myopia management clinic in select universities in the region. Practitioners discussed the availability of tools and products discussed during the presentation in the Middle Eastern market and how the restricted scope of practice, which limits the use of diagnostic drugs, offers the opportunity for soft multifocal contact lens use to be a popular intervention strategy among practitioners in the Middle East.

Dr Yazan Gammoh from Jordan, who chaired the Middle East webinars for IACLE, gave a lecture on 'Contact lens wear compliance'. He discussed that contact lenses are increasingly being prescribed for refractive correction, cosmetic enhancement and therapeutic reasons; whilst contact lens complications have been reported ranging from mild discomfort to microbial keratitis. Such complications are expected to increase with the increase of contact lens use. **Dr Gammoh** explained that these complications are mostly due to non-compliance to hygiene instructions or wear and care

procedures, which is not helped by the fact that contact lens practice in the Middle East is not restricted to contact lens practitioners, as cosmetics shops and other non-optical venues do offer contact lenses; especially coloured cosmetic contact lenses. Therefore, there is a need for educators, stakeholders and policy makers to highlight the importance of contact lens compliance to ensure safe wear of contact lenses among Middle Eastern Population.

Dr Gammoh's presentation provided an overview of contact lens compliance worldwide with a particular interest in recent studies published in the Middle East. Risk behaviours and factors that can affect compliance were reviewed and recommendations offered to enable educators and practitioners to contribute positively to ensure compliance among contact lens wearers. Educators debated whether the current contact lens teaching in the region is covering compliance in all its aspects and raised the need for quality research probing compliance behaviours in the population. On the other hand, practitioners were interested in how to detect non-compliant behaviour among patients during after-care visits, especially with the limited use of diagnostic tools such as slit lamps in Middle Eastern optical shops.

For the third Arabic-speaking webinar in the series, **Dr May Bakkar** from Jordan spoke on 'Meibomian gland dysfunction' during contact lens wear. She described its responsibility for secreting meibum, an essential constitute of the tear film lipid layer that provides tear film stability and protects against microbial agents and organic matter. **Dr Bakkar** suggested that contact lenses may be associated with possible changes in the meibomian glands function. This in turn may contribute to changes in lipid layer thickness and integrity, tear instability and decrease lens wettability due to a build-up of lipid deposits on the contact lens. She explained this will be responsible for contact lens discomfort and dryness symptoms in lens wearers. The lecture gave an evidence-based review of MGD related to contact lens wear including the pathogenies, epidemiology, risk factors, methods used to assess MGD (imaging and expression) and available management options of the disorder. Educators highlighted the need for more clinical training in the detection of MGD among final year students to prepare a generation of contact lens practitioners who are capable of assessment and management of the condition. In addition, practitioners expressing their need for continuing education and training specific to detection and management of the condition.

The final webinar of the series was hosted by **Mohamad Ali Hamadé** from Lebanon. He spoke on atopic diseases, including eczema, asthma, and rhinoconjunctivitis, being the most common chronic conditions of childhood. He discussed that atopy is also an established risk factor for bilateral, non-inflammatory corneal ectasias such as keratoconus. **Mohamad** explained that the earlier the intervention, the higher the success rate in preventing such complications resulting in significant childhood visual impairment. As contact lenses offer good visual acuity and help preventing visual impairment, he discussed the suitable speciality designs. **Mohamad's** presentation sparked a debate on keratoconus assessment and the use of contact lenses in teaching and training in the Middle East, where a lack of access to contact lens trial sets and inadequate diagnostic equipment is challenging the transition from theoretical to practical aspects of contact lens education in the region.