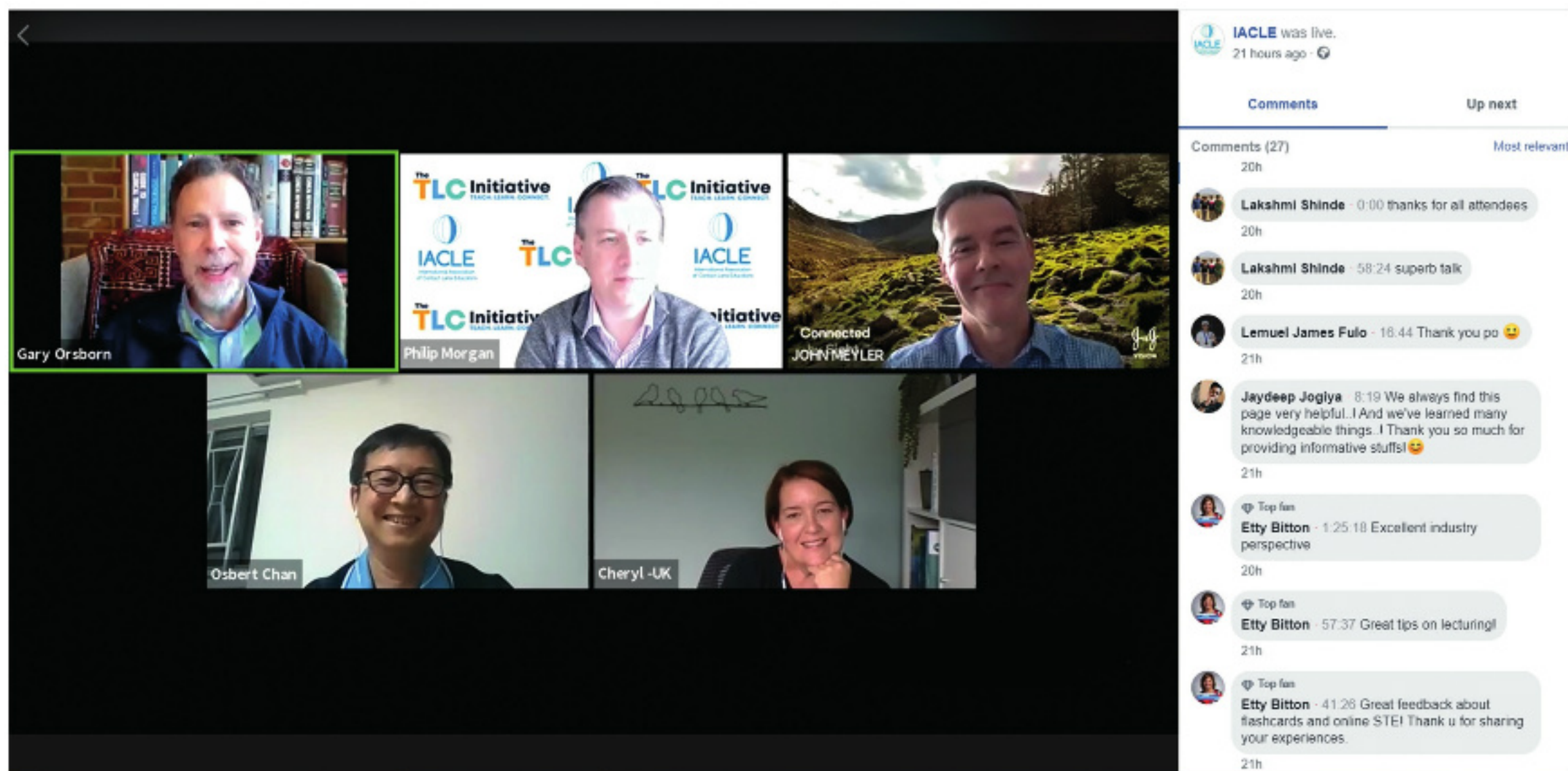


IACLE HOSTS ITS FIRST VIRTUAL CONFERENCE



The future is bright for the contact lens industry and there are positive developments arising from changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. This was the opinion of industry leaders who came together virtually on 26th September in the first-ever Virtual Conference hosted by The International Association of Contact Lens Educators (IACLE) on the theme 'Back to contact lenses'.

Several industry leaders took part in the conference that featured a panel discussion chaired by IACLE Vice President Professor Philip Morgan. Other panellists included Cheryl Donnelly, Head of International Professional

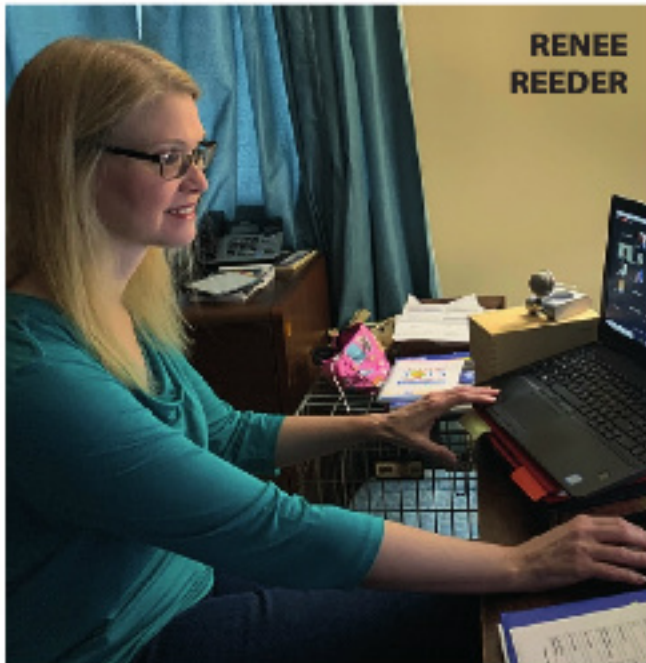
Affairs and International KOL Lead – Vision Care at Alcon, Gary Orsborn, Vice President Global Professional, Medical & Clinical Affairs, CooperVision, John Meyler, Global Head, Professional and Clinical Education, Johnson & Johnson Vision and Osbert Chan, Director of Medical and Clinical Affairs for Bausch + Lomb, Asia Pacific.

The key developments for the contact lens sector arising from the COVID-19 pandemic included:

- Collaboration between industry, practitioners, scientists and educators to dispel myths about the safety of contact lens wear at

the early stages of the pandemic

- Lack of going out, socialising and playing sport were the reasons for patients wearing contact lenses less, rather than safety concerns
- Hygiene was now 'top of mind' for patients and practitioners
- Efficiencies in appointments and services, such as telemedicine or 'teleoptometry'
- Rising demand for online ordering, direct-to-patient delivery and digital engagement
- Recognition that contact lenses are an important, ongoing revenue



stream for practices

- Acceptance of online learning among industry, practitioners, educators and students
- Opportunities for wearing contact lenses to avoid spectacles fogging and to enhance eye appearance when wearing face masks and coverings

Each of the panel members expressed optimism about the future for contact lenses and identified major changes to contact lens practice that had resulted from the pandemic:

According to **Cheryl Donnelly**, the patients' purchasing habits for contact lenses, and how and where they interacted with their contact lens practitioners, had changed. "We need to look at how patients want to engage, and consider changes to our practice patient journey to allow for the imposed and required changes. It's not about doing things to a lesser extent clinically... but doing things differently," she said.

Dr Gary Orsborn anticipated a permanent change in the patient journey. "Virtual aftercare appointments, I believe, will improve the situation we have in retaining patients in contact lenses and this should result in fewer dropouts, because of the effectiveness of improved virtual communications. Expect to see increased investment in telemedicine solutions for eye care."

John Meyler said the sector could work in a much smarter way going forward. "Patient experience will improve. This has been a time to reflect on how we can do things more efficiently and better serve patients. I think the future's very bright for the industry."

Dr Osbert Chan was also 'very optimistic' about the future. "We know what to do. We need to learn how to live with the virus and how to overcome it."

More than 200 delegates took part in the IACLE Virtual Conference live. Members participated via the Zoom platform, while non-members and students were able to watch selected sessions via Facebook.

The conference was introduced by IACLE President Dr Shehzad Naroo, chaired by Europe/Africa – Middle East Regional President Judith Morris and organised by Executive Manager of Educational Programs Nilesh Thite. Speakers on education topics were Lakshmi Shinde (India), Dr Etty Bitton (Canada), Professor Craig Woods (Australia), Fakhruddin Barodawala (Malaysia), Dr May Bakkar (Jordan), Dr Frank Eperjesi (UK), Professor Renée Reeder (USA) and Dr Byki Huntjens (UK).

A recording of the conference is available to IACLE members on its learning management system, IACLETOP, along with around 40 global, regional and national webinars delivered under the TLC Initiative so far. The next series of global webinars – on myopia and its management – will run weekly in November.

