

24 April 2021

‘Integrating research into education’ – IACLE’s Global Virtual Conference

International experts shared their knowledge and experiences with contact lens educators worldwide on how to combine research and education for our half-day conference last month. Amelia Morgan reports



Around 150 delegates tuned in live to IACLE’s ‘Integrating research into education’ themed Virtual Conference (24 April). The event was designed to support its educator members worldwide explore issues around incorporating research into educational process, covering a wide range of relevant topics from facilitating student research projects to having work published.

[Access the full conference through IACLETOP](#)



IACLE's President **Dr Shehzad Naroo** and Vice President **Professor Philip Morgan** welcomed the half-day conference before Executive Manager of Educational Development **Professor Craig Woods** delivered the first presentation on evidence-based teaching. Craig outlined the recent history of this concept, describing its introduction into the medical program at McMaster University in the early 1990s. Craig explained that 'evidence', in this context, is high-quality information derived from research-based investigations. 'It is more than simple facts', he outlined. Key to this, Craig argued, is an appreciation of good (and poor) evidence sources. High-quality evidence is delivered via well-designed projects such as randomized clinical trials, cohort studies and case-controlled findings. Craig indicated that to bring this form of teaching into optometry in general, and contact lenses in particular, it is essential to teach students how to recognize good evidence and for them to have an appreciation of study design.

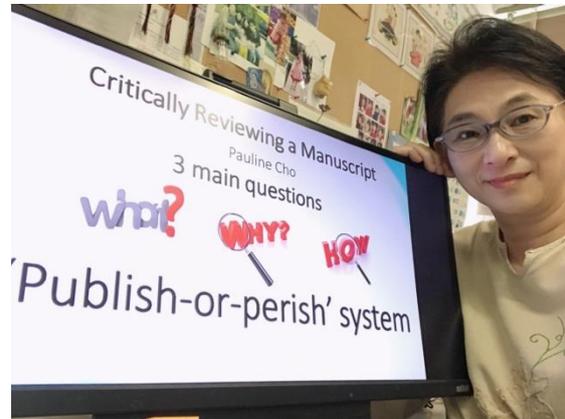
In addition to his work as IACLE President, **Dr Shehzad Naroo** is also the long-standing Editor of [Contact Lens and Anterior Eye](#). In the second presentation of the meeting, he outlined his thoughts on 'what gets published?'. He started by outlining the various types of publications and what they each sought to achieve, including review articles, full papers and letters to the Editor. He noted common errors in the manuscripts he receives to CLAE, which could result in the rejection of a paper, including omitting a declaration of interest where this is needed and the absence of a power calculation in clinical studies. 'In CLAE, we require papers to be written in the third person, passive voice', Shehzad outlined and continued to describe some examples of this form of writing. He presented his experienced views on the best approach to writing the critical components of a paper: the abstract, introduction, methods, results and conclusions. He ended his talk with some advice on how authors can address reviewer comments and a breakdown of the forms of papers that have been cited from his journal over the past year.



Continuing on the theme of successful publishing, **Professor Etty Bitton** who serves as IACLE's Treasurer and works at the [University of Montreal](#), Canada delivered the next presentation. Etty's talk covered the importance of a paper abstract and how it acts to briefly cover the key attributes of a paper to help readers ascertain its purpose and help them decide if it is relevant to their needs. 'Abstract requirements are specific to each journal', Etty outlined, noting differences in

style and word count. Intriguingly, she commented that the best time to prepare an abstract is after the paper or case report is written, rather than beforehand. Ety then deconstructed an abstract format into its parts and using examples pertinent to an IACLE audience (such as multifocal contact lenses, myopia and dry eyes), presented her thoughts into how the author can best write each section.

The delegates next enjoyed the final presentation on paper writing by **Professor Pauline Cho** from the [Hong Kong Polytechnic University](#), Hung Hom, China, who described how to critically review a submitted manuscript. Pauline first outlined the purpose of the peer review process, which aims to segregate good from bad science. 'Don't agree to review a manuscript which is beyond your area of expertise', said Pauline, on the basis that this may make for a poor review and one which is not fair to the authors. She outlined that a review needs to validate the quality of the science, the appropriateness of the methods used, the importance of the reported findings and the overall significance of the research itself. Pauline also noted reasons to reject a manuscript included work that did not add to the current literature, a flawed methodology and evidence of plagiarism. Professor Cho also suggested that any criticism should be constructive, suggesting how the author could improve their work in the future.



The middle section of the meeting was devoted to the challenges of managing student research; this was a panel discussion chaired by **Professor James Wolffsohn**, Aston University, Birmingham, UK, alongside **Stefan Bandlitz**, [Höhere Fachschule für Augenoptik Köln](#), Germany, **Monica Chaudhry**, [Sushant University](#), Gurgaon, India, **Yazan Gammoh**, Al-[Ahliyya Amman](#)

[University](#), Jordan, and **Orlando Neira**, [Fundación Universitaria del Área Andina](#), Colombia. In a lively and wide-ranging conversation, the group reflected on the importance of exposing undergraduate students to research to emphasize the importance of evidence generation to new eyecare practitioners. They noted that this could be a frustrating and challenging process given constraints on supervisor time. Stefan said that 'just like being a parent, as a research supervisor, it is important to act as a good role model, show students the importance of research, and demonstrate both good study design and how to review the literature'.

Runa Mazumder from the [Vidyasagar College of Optometry and Vision Science](#) in Kolkata, India, presented her thoughts on how to run a *Journal Club* which she defined as a meeting of a group of colleagues twice a week and she recommended the use of IACLE's Research Update to identify papers which are both timely and relevant. She advised that students can be divided into groups of 10, with one person selected to deliver a short presentation on the paper which all the students later answer. This system allows the educator to provide a mark for each student. 'This approach has been very effective', reported Runa, 'with students developing critical appraisal skills as they work through the papers they are reviewing.' A Journal Club also improves reading skills and critical thinking.



The various issues around costing a new research proposal were reviewed by **Dr Jennifer Whale**, a Strategic Funding Manager at [Aston University](#), Birmingham, UK. Research requires funding, but many of the actual costs of this sort of work are somewhat hidden, and an accurate costing model must be applied to any planned research. 'The full economic cost of a project is the full cost to your institution of you conducting research work, including the direct costs like consumables and travel, but also running costs – also known as

indirect costs or overheads – including contributions towards utilities, the research premises and services offered by the institution such as IT and finance', outline Dr Whale. She also advised that it is good to start thinking about costing early as the institutional approval process would take some time and that carefully reviewing the guidance from a funder is also crucial.

The meeting closed with a presentation on forging collaborations in research by **Professor Lyndon Jones** from the [University of Waterloo](#), Canada. Lyndon started by noting that there is evidence that research with the most significant impact comes from collaborative groups rather than from individuals. 'Such collaborations don't happen by magic', noted Professor Jones as he went on to deliver his '10 golden rules' for developing and maintaining collaborative networks with academic and industry partners. These rules included being prepared to share ideas with others and to involve multiple colleagues to help provide opportunities for others rather than working in silos. Lyndon noted that the more that a researcher shares, the more they would receive in return. He also encouraged delegates to leverage diversity in all its forms



to find people who have a range of core skills, including planning, execution and fundraising, among others. Lyndon also encouraged the audience to 'take a risk' in developing research collaborations and concluded that a good team is greater than the sum of its parts.

The meeting included lively interactive question and answers sessions that allowed delegates from Malawi, the Netherlands and Kenya, among other countries, to pose questions to the speakers, emphasizing the true international nature of the Association.

Feedback from the conference

'I like this mode of online meeting, which is not limited by time and space. Participants are far away from each other across the computer screen, but they seem to be very close. It is very rewarding to hear different voices of discussion during the meeting.'

'Excellent conference. Completely enjoyed each and every session.'

'Thanks for conducting such informative and precise event.'