

14 May 2022

'Make Students Practice Ready' – IACLE's Fourth Global Virtual Conference



Around 100 delegates tuned in live to IACLE's fourth Virtual Conference themed 'Make students practice ready'. IACLE President **Professor Philip Morgan** welcomed the half-day conference and handed it over to IACLE Treasurer / Secretary and Conference Chair **Dr ETTY BITTON**.

IACLE Executive Manager of Educational Development **Professor Craig Woods** delivered the first presentation on problem-based learning, an excellent fit for this topic, having experience working in several optometry institutions across the globe and establishing school curriculums. Professor Woods' talk focused on how problem-based learning works, the benefits, and how it can be applied to teaching optometry and contact lenses. The presentation began with an explanation of how problem-based learning differs from traditional learning, the steps involved, and the preparation required by educators. Craig highlighted his points by giving examples and demonstrating different cases to the delegates.

The IACLE [Case Reports](#) are available as a self-learning tool and in an interactive format to combine learning with confirmatory assessment – a great resource to prepare students before entering clinical requirements. IACLE Asia Pacific Regional Coordinator

Dr Cheni Lee discussed her experience using the Case Reports with her optometry students and demonstrated how she uses them on IACLE's Teaching Online Platform – IACLETOP. Dr Lee emphasized the Case Reports' value and ease of use.

An important topic, 'How to conduct practical sessions', was ably covered by **Dr Vinod Maseedupally** from the [School of Optometry and Vision Science at the University of New South Wales](#) in Sydney, Australia. He discussed how he conducts practical sessions and the changes he had to incorporate during the COVID-19 pandemic. He began with the typical four-step approach to teaching skills: demonstration, deconstruction, comprehension, and performance, and discussed how he uses a three-step process to design practical classes, which involves pre-practical activities, hands-on activities, and reflection exercises. During his talk, he quoted examples and took the delegates through minute details of planning and executing practical sessions. He stressed the importance of communication, feedback, and reflection exercises.

In the final session of Part One, **Dr Neema Ghorbani Mojarrad** from the [University of Bradford](#), UK, outlined some real-life challenges in assessing students' skills brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic. One problem was compounded by an increased number of students managed by the same number of clinical supervisors. He also discussed how to find solutions to these issues innovatively. The proposed solutions included dividing assessments into small sections, assessing history taking and communication, setting up multiple stations, utilizing polystyrene heads with model eyes to examine several students at a given time, using digital media, photos, videos, and case reports for assessing students' clinical and analytical skills.

Part Two of the conference began with a panel discussion titled 'Programs and activities to establish contact lens clinics at institutions'. **Dr Byki Huntjens**, IACLE Director and senior lecturer at [City, University of London](#), UK, chaired the session. The panel comprised of **Dr Ithar Beshtawi** from [An-Najah National University](#), Palestine, **Uma Mageswari Batumalai** from [SEGi University](#), Malaysia, **Professor Martín Edisson Giraldo Mendivelso** from [De La Salle University](#), Colombia, and **Professor Haiying Wang** from [Tianjin Vocational Institute](#), China. Each panellist explained their current situation regarding the types of clinics at their institution, the number of students and how they manage their clinical postings. One of the challenges Professor Giraldo faces is private clinics in their area market their practices using free consultations to attract patients. Professor Wang mentioned their optometry students perform screening for the university students, and those with eye problems are encouraged to visit the optometry clinics. Dr Beshtawi shared SEGi University's interesting initiative of 'contact lens awareness week', where university students and staff are invited for screenings and referred for a further check-up at optometry clinics if required.

Sarah Morgan, consultant and educator at the [University of Manchester](#), UK, spoke on another crucial aspect of preparing students for practice: effective patient communication and counselling. According to her, the greatest asset to helping a patient is understanding them better as a person, and this detail is often overshadowed by clinical information. Mrs Morgan emphasized the importance of involving patients in the conversation, developing rapport, instructing them, and explaining the tests. As well as the clinical history, the examiner should also learn about the patient's lifestyle and visual tasks. She believes

teaching patient communication should begin early, and educators should take ownership. Students need to follow a holistic approach – ‘in contact lens practice, it is essential to know who you are dealing with to be able to handle them well’, says Sarah.

Making the best of [IACLETOP](#) was next on the agenda. **Dr Nirav Mehta** from the [Hari Jyot College of Optometry](#), India, shared his personal experience using the Teaching Online Platform in his teaching. To drive his point, Dr Mehta navigated through IACLETOP during his entire presentation. He uses the platform to develop assignments and has designed a page for the college within IACLETOP, where he has uploaded materials in the form of documents, images, and videos. Dr Mehta believes the Case Reports are the most useful resource on the platform.

The meeting closed with a presentation on internships and externships by **Dr ETTY BITTON**. As the Director of Externship Programs at the School of Optometry at [Université de Montréal](#), she deals with this topic regularly. Dr Bitton began her talk by clearly defining internship and externship and the difference between the two. Externships taking place outside of institutions typically pose more challenges. She discussed the program’s why, what, who, how and where. The first step is to set specific objectives – the why behind the externship. In selecting a supervisor, Dr Bitton explained that ‘you are looking for good mentors who want to give back to the community’. She ended her talk by measuring the impact of the program that must be mapped against the objectives set in the beginning.

[Catch up on all sessions from the ‘Make students practice ready’ Virtual Conference](#)