

# CONFERENCE

## Teaching teachers: a global approach

The International Association of Contact Lens Educators' approach to raising standards of education worldwide has potential benefits for all those involved in contact lenses, as **Shehzad Naroo** and **Alison Ewbank** report

It is 9.30am on a Wednesday morning in the Peruvian capital, Lima. Guillermo Carrillo is beginning his weekly radio broadcast – IACLE in the World – to more than 100 educators and practitioners across 10 countries in Latin America, and in the US. This week's topic for discussion by key opinion leaders in the region is opportunities for fitting children with contact lenses.

Meanwhile in the UK, Dr Raquel Gil Cazorla is delivering an interactive seminar on soft lens fitting to second-year students at Aston University, using the New IACLE Contact Lens Course and blended learning techniques.

Her students have already viewed a pre-recorded narrated lecture via the university's virtual learning environment, allowing them to bring their own practical experiences and questions to the seminar. The interactive session is also recorded for students to play back.

These are just two examples of how the International Association of Contact Lens Educators (IACLE) is helping to deliver high-quality education in contact lenses and, increasingly, harnessing technology to share resources and experiences around the world.

### PROMOTING SAFE USE

Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2019, IACLE is dedicated to raising the standard of contact lens education and promoting the safe use of contact lenses worldwide. Membership is open to all those involved in contact lens education, whether working in a recognised teaching institution, or in industry or practice that includes a teaching role.

Today IACLE has 839 active members in 76 countries, teaching at 570 institutions and reaching an estimated 20,000 students each year. Half of IACLE's members are in



**IACLE Americas Regional Coordinator Guillermo Carrillo, inset, hosts a weekly radio broadcast, IACLE in the World, and Dr Raquel Gil Cazorla (right) teaches students at Aston University using IACLE's online resources**

its global priority countries – China, India, Korea, Taiwan, Mexico, Brazil and Russia – identified in consultation with industry partners. Europe and North America are also well represented.

In the UK, IACLE has 38 members at 14 institutions teaching contact lenses, and in industry. It works closely with the British Universities Committee of Contact Lens Educators (BUCCLE), holding joint educational meetings to coincide with the British Contact Lens Association (BCLA) Clinical Conference. In North America, IACLE also has ties with the Association of Optometric Contact Lens Educators (AOCE).

Currently, IACLE's executive board is led by academics based in the UK. Dr Shehzad Naroo took over as president in 2011 and Professor Philip Morgan of the University of Manchester is vice president. Board members and staff cover all three of IACLE's global regions: Americas, Asia Pacific and Europe/Africa – Middle East.

**TABLE 1 IACLE Resources and Programmes**

- New IACLE Contact Lens Course
- Fellowship of IACLE (FIACLE)
- IACLE Distance Learning Programme
- IACLE Student Trial Exam
- Interactive Case Reports and Image Collections
- Web Lectures and Discussion Forums
- Research Updates
- IACLE Travel Awards and IACLE Contact Lens Educator of the Year Awards
- Educator Meetings, Train-the-Trainer Programmes and Congresses on Contact Lens Education

### FLAGSHIP RESOURCE

IACLE has developed a range of resources and programmes to help educators improve and maintain the quality of their contact lens teaching (table 1). Most are delivered via its website, [www.iacle.org](http://www.iacle.org). Regular local, regional and global events are also held.

IACLE's flagship resource is the New IACLE Contact Lens Course (New ICLC), a series of 33 lectures in six modules, recently revised and updated by the world's leading authorities in contact lenses to keep pace with developments. The latest addition is a three-lecture module: Myopia and its Management.

The New ICLC is available exclusively to IACLE members to download from its website. Initially in English and now being translated into other key languages, presentations cover all aspects of contact lens education from the anatomy of the cornea to the business of contact lens practice.

The modules provide educators with the materials they need to teach a high-quality contact lens course, and are also suitable for students and practitioners. Case reports and image galleries support the course.

The self-study IACLE Distance Learning Programme helps new educators improve their own contact lens knowledge and teaching skills. IACLE Student Trial Exams test final-year and postgraduate students' progress and address areas of concern.

Fellowship of IACLE (FIACLE) is unique in recognising accomplishments in contact lens education. FIACLEs are seen as leaders in their field, are frequently invited to speak at educational meetings, and often provide practitioner and student education within their professional communities.

IACLE also holds Educator Meetings and Train-the-Trainer programmes to develop the teaching skills of educators and main-

tain their standard of knowledge.

Communication between educator and student – and student and patient – is a particular focus. A 2017 congress was held in Hyderabad, India alongside the Second World Congress of Optometry.

Annual IACLE Contact Lens Educator of the Year Awards and IACLE Travel Awards recognise achievements in contact lens education and allow members to travel to major international meetings. A monthly newsletter provides links to useful free resources. And Research Update – sent to IACLE and BCLA members – is a monthly summary of key publications appearing in the peer-reviewed literature.

Perhaps most importantly, IACLE has established a global network of contact lens educators to share resources and experiences, interact and learn from each other.

### TECHNOLOGY TALKS

Increasingly, IACLE is using technology to extend its reach, whether through web lectures broadcast live online to educators and students across countries or continents, or via live streaming of its World Congress on Contact Lens Education, most recently held in Manchester.

Web lectures, delivered via the WebEx platform, have allowed up to 14 institutions to take part in a lecture. And educators in China can now participate in lectures through WeChat. On this platform – which is real time – members and industry share their teaching experiences and educational materials.

The 2015 Third IACLE World Congress (Shaping the future of contact lens education) examined the use of blended learning and technologies such as Evernote, Blackboard, Eliademy, Canvas, Explain Everything, Nearpod and Showbie that members could bring to their teaching.

The congress also looked at some of the issues common to educators worldwide. One of the greatest challenges was providing hands-on experience with real patients for large numbers of students. Delegates learned about a new school at Deakin University in Australia where, under a unique case-based optometry programme, students worked together in teams.

The congress also offered some potential solutions for the future, with virtual and augmented reality devices that could create authentic learning opportunities. In the US, the University of Houston was using a simulation lab to demonstrate refractive techniques to students, and in China a virtual fitting centre was among the technology already in use.



**IACLE assistant secretary Dr Luigina Sorbara, associate professor at the University of Waterloo, Canada, teaching contact lens fitting to students in Korea**

### WIDER BENEFITS

IACLE's structured approach to contact lens education has the potential to benefit all those involved in contact lenses and also has implications for optometric education in general.

Educators and their students worldwide can benefit from a consistently high standard of education and access to essential teaching, learning and assessment resources. The profession and employers can benefit from practitioners graduating with appropriate theoretical knowledge and practical skills, and the ability to take an evidence-based approach to practice.

Industry can also benefit from IACLE increasing the number of skilled contact lens practitioners throughout the world, thereby facilitating the use of contact lenses. But the ultimate beneficiaries should be patients themselves, by helping to ensure the proper fitting and safe use of contact lenses worldwide.

There is evidence that higher levels of

### 'ENGAGING RESOURCES WITHIN A SUPPORTING ENVIRONMENT'

**Dr Luisa Simo is associate professor and lecturer in contact lenses at the University of Plymouth's School of Health Professions**

'Being a member of IACLE enables me to enhance the learning experience of my modules. Their suggested structure reassures me I am teaching what matters in contact lenses in the UK and the world, keeping in line with my peers.'

'The online resources are constantly updated and I can access these from anywhere, including the lecture theatre. The high-quality images allow my students to contextualise their learning. In addition, I feel I am part of a support network that keeps my teaching informed and relevant through workshops, conferences and support from peers.'

education among practitioners, greater experience and FIACLE status are associated with advanced contact lens fitting.<sup>1</sup> Optometrists graduating from institutions with greater IACLE collaboration and support report greater satisfaction with their training, especially with theoretical aspects.<sup>2</sup>

Many IACLE members and Fellows are also involved in contact lens research and regularly have their work published in peer-reviewed journals. Research ranges from basic science and randomised controlled trials, to studies of the scope of practice in individual countries and annual reports on international prescribing trends.

IACLE's network helps facilitate collaboration in research as well as in education. A group of FIACLEs in India, led by director of educational programs Nilesh Thite and global education manager Lakshmi Shinde, recently published a study challenging traditional approaches to contact lens recommendation.<sup>3</sup> And members were recruited for a Europe-wide evaluation of rigid gas-permeable fitting and education in 50 institutions across 15 countries.<sup>4</sup>

In March 2018 IACLE surveyed all its members to determine their use of and attitudes to current resources, programmes and events, and what they would like IACLE to provide in future. The results will be used to set the agenda for contact lens education in the next five years and beyond around the world.

A radio broadcast from Peru or a first-year student seminar at Aston may seem a world away from everyday optometric practice. But IACLE's global approach to 'teaching the teachers', along with the sharing of resources and experiences worldwide, is one from which the profession can benefit and optometric education as a whole could usefully learn. **○**  
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References available online at [opticianonline.net](http://opticianonline.net)