

# EDITORIAL

## WCOE: Optometric Education Through a Global Lens

Aurora Denial, OD, FAAO



In September, I had the pleasure of attending and presenting at the World Council of Optometry's Sixth World Conference on Optometric Education (WCOE) in Durban, South Africa. As the WCO Web site explains, the WCOE is "the international forum for optometric educators from around the world to come together to discuss and debate challenges and

trends in optometric education." A total of 269 speakers and delegates representing 44 countries, including 26 delegates from the United States and Canada, were present at the conference.

### Key Themes and Subthemes

This year's overall theme was "Meeting Society's Needs: Challenges and Trends in Optometric Education." The conference also addressed three subthemes: developing appropriate human resources, strategies in providing quality education and curricular development, and trends and developments in optometric education programs. The meeting ran consecutively with the World Congress on Refractive Error, which was a unique opportunity to deepen our understanding of the global efforts being put forward to reduce vision impairment due to uncorrected refractive error.

According to Dr. Bina Patel, chairperson of the WCOE Steering Committee, "The conference was a success in bringing forward many important issues facing optometric education around the world. The improvement in the quality and availability of vision and eye care globally is directly related to the continual growth of optometric education programs." The conference included lecture and poster presentations, workshops and regional reports, and Dr. Patel reported the following highlights of the presentations:

- The need for human resource development, including the importance of understanding public health needs and educational resources.
- Faculty retention and mentorship, including the importance of supporting and developing scholarly activity.

- Successes and limitations of expansion of optometric programs with examples of institutions sharing expertise in developing curricular, faculty expertise and clinical experience.
- Sharing techniques for improving the effectiveness of optometric educators in didactic and clinical settings, such as cultural competency, critical thinking, technology and the importance of including neuro-development in the curriculum.
- Innovative methods of assessing student competencies, lifelong learning and issues with continuing education.

For me, attending the conference represented a learning experience and an opportunity to increase international involvement in the journal. Disseminating information on the challenges in optometric education in developing nations is an important component of the optometric educational literature. I encourage all of my international colleagues to contribute to *Optometric Education* by sharing your information, research, dilemmas and ideas.

### In This Edition of the Journal

This edition of the journal highlights a topic that most faculty have encountered during their careers as educators. It is a privilege to participate in a student's education, but it is particularly rewarding when that student faces and overcomes the challenges of a learning disability. In her paper, "Meeting the Needs of the Optometry Student with ADHD," Ms. Elizabeth Heiney points out that "Students with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder represent the largest group of students seeking disability services in the college setting." The paper also presents recommendations for the educator in both the classroom and clinical settings. In a similarly themed paper, "Diagnosing Reading Disabilities at a Graduate School Level," Ms. Sandra Rainwater-Lawler and Dr. Jasmine Wong Yumori utilize a case report to discuss the topic of reading disabilities. Their paper presents information on types of reading disabilities, symptoms and diagnostic testing.

Other topics covered in this edition include the role of optometry in tobacco cessation. In "Tobacco Dependence Education in Optometry: A Canadian Pilot Study Assess-

ing Practices and Opportunities,” Dr. Marlee M. Spafford and co-authors state that “tobacco use and dependence is a preventable cause of morbidity and mortality and healthcare providers can be effective facilitators of tobacco cessation among their patients.”

This edition also features “Acute Ocular Trauma in a Child: A Teaching Case Report.” Drs. Wendy J. Haaland Stone and Stephanie A. Klemencic present a clinical scenario and educational guidelines to facilitate teaching. This is an important topic because ocular injuries in children are common and can range in severity. Optometry students and recent graduates must feel confident providing care in these situations.

In this edition you will also notice a slight modification in the format of the “Think Tank” feature. The key concept — an opinion-based forum for sharing ideas — remains the same. However, rather than pre-identifying an issue and inviting contributors to submit their comments, we present “Some Thoughts on Clinical Teaching” from Dr. Mark Vogel. We challenge you, the readers of the journal, to voluntarily send us your comments on this piece. Do you agree with Dr. Vogel? Have you had the same experiences? Did you come to the same conclusions? Send your comments to me at DenialA@neco.edu, and we will publish them in the next edition of the journal.

## OPTOMETRIC EDUCATION DIPLOMATE PROGRAM NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS

The American Academy of Optometry’s Optometric Education Section is now accepting applications for its Optometric Education Diplomate Program. The Academy Board of Directors approved the program in May.

The granting of diplomate status in Optometric Education is recognition of a focus and expertise in education beyond the level of teaching responsibilities that are commonly held by most faculty. It recognizes advancement in the areas of scholarly activity, educational research, advanced education and the delivery and transfer of knowledge.

For program criteria and an application visit [www.aaopt.org/section/oe/becoming](http://www.aaopt.org/section/oe/becoming).