

Re:View

Keeping excellence in your sights | February 2020 | Issue 38



Do spectacles
influence the academic
performance in children
from different nations?

Stepping into
management

Training opportunities

Seeing in 2020 with more opportunities to progress



A happy new year to all, and welcome to this first issue of *Re:View* for a new decade, one which will see ABDO introduce innovative

and exciting learning opportunities for the profession, including courses for those wishing to achieve management and leadership skills. In this issue we include interviews with past College students who have chosen that career route, with their advice for those interested in following a similar path.

We also have a fascinating review article by one of our degree students. Shilpa Patel has been looking into research on the effect that wearing spectacles may have on the academic performance of early adolescent school children from different nations.

In addition, we include an interview with senior courses administrator, Rachel Blazyca-White, who gives us an insight, not just into her own important role, but to the huge amount of work that goes on behind the scenes at ABDO College.

Speaking of which, did you know that every summer for the past three years, ABDO College has been host and educator to a group of optometry and ophthalmology students from China? This is always a real eye-opener for

them, as there is little emphasis on dispensing in China. Our article on pages 4–5 explains how, in their two-week programme in 2019, we helped them to explore the contrast between optical systems in the two countries.

Finally, I do hope that you're enjoying your bamboo cups and ABDO water bottles, as well as the new water dispensers: all part of ABDO College's progress towards its ambition of becoming carbon neutral. Please see future editions of *Re:View* magazine for further updates.

Angela McNamee

BSc(Hons) MCOptom FBDO (Hons) CL FBCLA Cert Ed

Chairman,
ABDO College Board of Trustees

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ABDO College

Godmersham Park, Godmersham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 7DT

tel: 01227 738 829 option 1 | fax: 01227 733 900 | info@abdocollege.org.uk | www.abdocollege.org.uk

www.twitter.com/abdocollege | www.facebook.com/ABDOCollege

www.linkedin.com/company/the-abdo-college-of-education | www.instagram.com/abdocollege



News

Workshop marks a milestone for popular new Optical Assistant Course

ABDO College celebrated a milestone in December when the first group of optical assistants on its new Optical Assistant Course met at ABDO's National Resource Centre in Birmingham for a workshop to learn more about key skills in optics.

Over 70 students enrolled on the first intake of the course which started in September.

"The latest part of the optical assistant programme to debut, the Practical Skills Workshop, added to the course's ongoing success," said the College's head of operations, Steve Hertz.

"The day was fully booked more than a month ahead which confirmed our thinking that those working in assistant roles are keen to progress and expand their skills. The feedback from students has been lovely to hear and shows that

a fantastic day was had by all. Well done to the staff and students for making it such a positive, informative experience."

The new workshop enables optical assistants to develop their skills in spectacle repairs and adjustments, as well as pre-screening.

One of the lecturers running the course, Rian Love, added: "The workshop brought together a diverse background of optical assistants, some long-term optical staff and others who had only been in practice a matter of months.

"It was fantastic to meet so many students who felt that this course was just the beginning of their optical education and who intend to carry on within optical education upon completion."

Optical assistant, Fabio Carmo, who was on the course, commented: "It was a very informative event. I thought



I knew a lot after working in optics for nearly three years, but I left knowing a lot more, all delivered with great humour by both lecturers. I would recommend everyone doing the course to attend the workshop."

Highlighting the success of the first course, Rian concluded: "The intake of over 70 students was unprecedented for a course that was launched at the last Optrafair and demonstrated a great demand in this area for introductory education for optical support staff. It is a fantastic way to start support staff towards a future dispensing qualification with ABDO College."

The Practical Skills Workshop is suitable for those new to optics, as well as optical assistants who want to formalise their knowledge. The next workshop takes place on 9 March.

Staff give 100% for show and tell

Details of all the College's courses and training opportunities were shared by staff at 100% Optical last month, with the official launch of the College's new prospectus.

College staff were on the stand at the show at ExCeL London from January 25-27 to answer any training queries, and to help practice owners to plan training for their practice team. They emphasised that there are plenty of courses for support staff and potential DOs starting this autumn.

The annual tradeshow attracts over 9,000 professionals and features lectures, workshops, an exhibition and a catwalk eyewear fashion show. The ABDO College Book and Equipment Shop was also there, offering free postage on orders made at the event.

Additionally, the College's head of operations, Steve Hertz, gave a lecture during the show entitled, 'Continuous opportunities: optical careers pathways', on the Sunday and Monday.

To find out more about the Optical Assistant Course, visit www.abdocollege.org.uk/courses

News

College prizewinners are honoured at Canterbury Cathedral ceremony

ABDO College students were among the prizewinners honoured when ABDO celebrated the graduation of 318 dispensing opticians and contact lens opticians in the annual ceremony at Canterbury Cathedral.

In the main celebration of the year, five College students were there to receive their prizes.

Natalie Skulskyi received the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers Prize for the highest mark in section B of the final qualifying practical examination. The prize was presented by the Company's Master, dispensing optician Huntly Taylor.

Sarah Owen received the Stepper Prize for the highest mark in the unit 2 preliminary qualifying examination.

It was presented by Stepper UK's managing director, Peter Reeve.

Rachael Bailey received the Rodenstock Prize for the highest mark in section D of the final qualifying practical examination.

Arron Brown won the Contamac Prize for being the best student on the contact lens distance learning course. India Webb received the Millmead Optical Group Prize for the highest aggregate mark in section C of the final qualifying examination.

Another five College students also received prizes but were unable to attend the ceremony. Donna Munro received the British Contact Lens Association Prize for the highest

aggregate mark in the theory examination of the Certificate in Contact Lens Practice.

Kirsten Mason won the Essilor Prize for the highest mark in units 1a and 1b of the preliminary qualifying examination. Nicholas Page was awarded the Alcon Prize for Excellence for being the best candidate in the practical examination of the Certificate in Contact Lens Practice.

Stephen Alexander received the Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers Prize for the highest aggregate mark in sections 2, 3 and 4 of the practical examination of the Certificate in Contact Lens Practice. Jay Hughes was awarded the Bailey Prize for the highest mark in the Contact Lens Certificate qualification.

Historic London setting for rewarding staff and students' hard work

ABDO College staff and students were among those celebrating at the last annual presentation ceremony of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (WCSM), held at the historic Apothecaries Hall in London.

Among the 16 new freemen admitted to the Company at the event in October was College technician Mark Turner and College lecturer Haydn Dobby, who also graduated SMC(Tech). Nineteen students were awarded certificates and diplomas by the Company out of 130 who had taken the examinations in England and Wales.

Trainee dispensing optician, Matthew Spiers (pictured), a second-year student doing the Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing run by the College and Canterbury Christ Church University, received a prize at the event for writing the best report about the bursary of £1,000 he had been awarded by the WCSM at the start of his course.

Matthew said of the event: "It was a brilliant chance to be able to meet with some hugely important and interesting people. I would urge anyone beginning an optical course to apply for the bursary."

Other guests at the celebration included College principal Jo Underwood and ABDO president Clive Merchant.



News

Displaying admiration for a pioneering and popular stalwart

A new set of display cases at ABDO College were unveiled in a ceremony to commemorate the life and work of ABDO's popular former head of marketing, Michael Potter, who died in 2018.

Michael had qualified as a dispensing optician in 1977 and had joined ABDO as head of marketing in 2007, following a successful career in both retail and manufacturing optics. He had had a successful period in high street optics before enjoying a long career with frames and lenses company Rodenstock UK.

Michael was passionate about optics and the skills and dedication of his colleagues. He created fresh branding for both ABDO and ABDO College and

is remembered by colleagues and friends at both for the level of detailed professionalism in his work which set new high standards that will endure for years to come.

The display cases, along with a plaque detailing Michael's contributions, were unveiled by his wife Alison at a ceremony in front of staff and ABDO members.

General secretary of ABDO, Sir Anthony Garrett, CBE HonFBDO said: "Michael's contribution to the profession cannot be overestimated. His part in the development of both ABDO and ABDO College is unrivalled and his love of the art of spectacle design is reflected in the collections housed in these two cabinets."



Michael was also a freeman of the City of London and a liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers.

New lease of life for the College and its noteworthy historic Kent home

ABDO College celebrated an important milestone when the lease was renewed on its historic premises at Godmersham Park until December 2040.

The College was established in 2001 by ABDO as a centre of excellence for the optical profession, specialising in distance and blended learning education. It is the only college in the UK devoted solely to the teaching of the theory and practical aspects of ophthalmic dispensing and its related specialist areas.

ABDO's general secretary, Sir Anthony Garrett, CBE HonFBDO, said: "The College has grown and developed significantly. I am delighted that the trustees have been

able to extend the lease. This provides the highly capable academic and support staff with the reassurance that the College will remain at Godmersham for many years to come. It is also a clear signal to employers and future students that the College is determined to remain at the forefront of ophthalmic dispensing studies."

The Grade I listed building at Godmersham Park gives students attending ABDO College on block release a truly unique educational experience. The building dates back to 1732 and author Jane Austen was a regular visitor between 1798–1813. Her novel *Mansfield Park* is said to be based on Godmersham

Park and the historic building now features on the reverse side of the £10 note.

Situated between Ashford and Canterbury, the College provides an ideal venue for study and reflection away from the pressures and demands of everyday practice life. It lies within 1,000 acres of beautiful Kent countryside and benefits from stunning views across the North Downs.

Although the landmark building itself is historic, the College has a continuing programme for improving its facilities and equipment for students, with an up-to-date lecture theatre being the latest addition.

Broadening horizons and friendships at the College

ABDO College has held a summer school for students from China for the last three years, offering them optical training in one of England's finest historic buildings and an experience they'll never forget.

During the College's last summer break, Godmersham hosted 16 Chinese students from Wenzhou Medical University, which is a partner of ABDO. The students all had a first degree and were either on a three or five-year optometry programme, or an eight-year ophthalmology programme.

The packed two-week agenda was organised by ABDO's head of professional services and international development, Elaine Grisdale, who has been learning to speak Mandarin for over three years.

"The students were chosen from 50 candidates due to their enthusiasm for dispensing and also their level of English," Elaine explained. "This group spoke English well and, despite not knowing each other before they arrived, they were a very friendly group who integrated well and enjoyed being in each other's company. For almost all of the students, it was their first time out of China."

A typhoon which hit Wenzhou, Shanghai and the east coast of China meant that the programme had to be reorganised as the students were held up for a day.

Explaining the aim of the lectures and workshops, Elaine said: "I put the programme together to give them a good overview of the UK optical system, subjects we study in dispensing and also to give them a cultural experience

of England. In China there is not as much emphasis on dispensing correctly in their curricula. It was nice to expose them to the technicalities of what we do, including regulation and patient communication."

The summer school was supported by guest speakers such as Stepper UK managing director, Peter Reeve, who gave a talk on frame production and the need for quality in dispensing.

ABDO examiner Amy Seaman, who had just returned from the Vision China conference, explained modern frame materials. She also highlighted the importance of frame fitting and adjustment, a contrast with China where rubber attachments are often put onto frame sides to stop them from slipping.

A facial measurement workshop was also held which enabled the students to understand in more detail the complexities surrounding the perfect fit.

Compassionate and care

The students had a visit to the Kent Association for the Blind during their stay at the College. "This is always a trip which the students love, and they take away a lot, as low vision services are not as developed in China," said Elaine.

"The way we take care of patients and keep the person at the heart of the care we give, that compassionate aspect,

always impresses them. This year we also had a talk on helping patients who are deaf, as well as blind."

ABDO College technician Mark Turner gave two workshops which proved popular, focusing on lens recognition as well as spectacle repairs and modifications. He also organised the end of summer school rounders match.

Richard Rawlinson, optical lead at the Local Optical Committee Support Unit, explained the more political side of UK optics including regulation and



how services are funded. He also conducted sessions regarding an introduction to leadership, with some enjoyable workshops.

Hoya's professional services manager, Andy Sanders, gave a presentation on dispensing the presbyopic patient and dispensing for the digital age. A practical session was run on taking more sophisticated measurements using a dispensing tablet versus more traditional forms of measuring.

Myopia was a hot topic of the summer school. Elaine talked about the myopia

epidemic which is very much in the minds of Chinese practitioners after the decree by President Xi Jinping saying that people should be working towards retarding and eradicating its progression. Head of ABDO CET, Alexandra Webster, visited the College to run a managing myopia discussion workshop and to highlight the role of contact lenses in myopia correction.

The weekend was spent in London at the students' own expense and began with a visit to the College of Optometrists where they were shown around the British Optical Association Museum by its curator Neil Handley, who explained the history of vision.

The final week of the summer school began with lectures on the psychology of the patient and looking after a vulnerable patient group. "I spoke about the notion of freedom for the different age groups we serve, relating that to vision and their visual choices," said Elaine adding, "This struck a chord with the students as they didn't think that glasses could have such an impact on people's lives.

"The other presentation was about dementia and giving an appropriate eye exam and dispensing to this group of patients. In China there are currently 10.5 million dementia patients, and this is set to triple by 2050, with a massive effect on social care."

ABDO's practical examiner and practice visitor, Jayshree Vasani, gave the students a comprehensive introduction to visual impairment. Another visitor to the College was a lecturer in Mandarin at Manchester Metropolitan University, Professor Yang Fang, who gave the

students a presentation on what life is really like in the UK for Chinese students and professionals.

Professional relations executive, Charlotte Timbury, from Essilor looked at modern MAR coatings and then with ABDO board member Julie Lees ran two mini labs on photochromics and sunwear.

In an outside visit, one group of students went to Specsavers in Canterbury and the other two groups went to Specsavers in Ashford to learn how people in the UK go for an eye exam, what happens and the dispensing process.

Best practice

Evening lectures at the College were led by contact lens optician Diane Nash who took the students through the notion of professional conduct, best practice in dispensing and what it means in the UK.

Immediate past president of ABDO, Fiona Anderson, president of the International Opticians Association, conducted the final two lectures on the importance of getting children's spectacles correct and effective communication with

children. She also presented the students with special attendance certificates.

The final presentations were from the Chinese students themselves. "It is always gratifying for the ABDO and College people involved to see how much their time with us means to them and also how much they have learned," said Elaine.

"The standard of the presentations was excellent, moving and inspiring. They had put a lot of thought and effort into creating quality feedback in the spare time they had, despite jetlag, working in a second language and some of them revising for exams."

Elaine concluded: "I joined the students in singing a rendition in Mandarin of a famous Chinese pop song called Pengyou, meaning friend. It was an emotional song and there were a few tears and hugs for this group who came together as strangers at the beginning and who were leaving as friends. I said in my introductory speech that we would be seen as laoshi, teachers, but we wanted to leave as pengyou, friends, and that's what we did."



Passage from India

In their final year, ABDO College degree students are required to complete a dissertation which focuses on a research question of their choice. In this feature, you can read about Shilpa Patel, her inspirational career journey and her research paper, *'Do the provision and use of spectacles influence the academic performance of early adolescent school children from different nations?'*



Shilpa Patel

Shilpa Patel moved from India to the UK 11 years ago and like many practitioners, her move into optics wasn't what she originally planned. Although she had had a career in banking, she struggled to get a job in the UK banking industry, however, when she saw a vacancy in an Optical Express window, she decided to

apply for the job of optical assistant and her career path totally changed.

Looking back, she reflected: "Luckily my knowledge in the retail industry and a good customer service attitude helped me get the job. I love maths and I soon realised the job involved lots of areas where maths was necessary, which I really enjoyed doing."

As a trainee dispensing optician, Shilpa was able to increase her optical knowledge, gaining confidence in dealing with different kinds of spectacle prescriptions and an insight into various abnormal ocular conditions. She qualified as a senior optical assistant with Boots Opticians and then gained experience of managing staff and dealing with various patient problems, as well as their 'out-of-the-box' requests.

"This made me realise that I had the potential to move forward and become

a dispensing optician," she explained. "I have always challenged myself and hence I chose to do the BSc in Ophthalmic Dispensing alongside the FBDO course."

Although Shilpa was anxious about going back to study after a 15-year gap, once she met the staff of ABDO College she felt relieved. "The lecturers spend immense time explaining their subject. They are friendly and approachable, which has helped me a lot over these three years," she highlighted.

Being a lover of maths, and with a background in banking, it's not surprising that Shilpa's favourite part of the courses was always the maths involved.

Her least favourite was to learn theory in the second year. "Although important, the detailed learning of the standards of practice did drain me," she revealed.

Thankfully there were no areas in the courses which she really struggled with. "The lecturers were readily available to give advice via emails which helped when I was stuck with either finding references or understanding a topic or writing an essay," she added. "Discussions with fellow students and approaching the lecturers also helped me overcome these difficulties."

'I have always challenged myself and hence I chose to do the BSc in Ophthalmic Dispensing alongside the FBDO course.'

For her thesis, Shilpa chose to research, *'Do the provision and use of spectacles influence the academic performance of early adolescent school children from different nations?'*

Inspirations

Explaining her inspirations, she said: "I am of Indian origin and have got an adolescent who wears spectacles. Like so many others, my family migrated to

optician to increase their awareness of the benefits of wearing spectacles," she emphasised.

After beginning her career in the multiples sector Shilpa is now working for an independent practice in Southend-on-Sea. "There is no pressure to sell like multiple stores," she said.

"Additionally, I can spend more time with patients which reassures me that I have given the most appropriate advice

'Just stay focused. Pre-plan your study routine and remember there is no harm in asking questions, even if you think it is a silly question. Finally, just believe in yourself.'

this country for better opportunities. Taking into consideration my scenario, I thought it would be ideal research as academic achievements play a vital role in the socio-economic development of the country.

"Once I developed my research question, I pre-planned my research essay, which did involve lots of time management and reading lots of related literature."

After completing her research, Shilpa concluded that the literature found there were pinpointers that spectacles could help improve the academic achievements of adolescents, however, after considering various variables, more research providing conclusive evidence was required.

"Parents and students should be appropriately advised by the dispensing

to them on their frame and lenses selection. Moreover, there is a lot of freedom in choosing the lens supplier to meet a particular patient's needs."

Shilpa's next steps in her career are to gain enough experience as a dispensing optician over the next two years to be able to register for either the CLO course with ABDO College, once her son finishes his GCSEs, or possibly to do an optometry course in the future.

"With the vast ocean of opportunities available in optics, I would like to open my own practice one day," she mused. And her tips for others following a similar path? "Just stay focused. Pre-plan your study routine and remember there is no harm in asking questions, even if you think it is a silly question. Finally, just believe in yourself," she concluded.

ABDO COLLEGE PROSPECTUS
2020-21



New ABDO College prospectus

ABDO College specialises in distance and blended learning education for the optical profession. It is the only college in the UK devoted solely to the teaching of ophthalmic dispensing and its related specialist areas.

Offering a range of courses including optical support, technician training, access, foundation degree, diploma, degree, advanced and honours, ABDO College provides quality programmes leading to ABDO examinations and qualifications.

To obtain a copy of the ABDO College prospectus please visit www.abdocollege.org.uk

Do the provision and use of spectacles influence the school children from different nations?

By Shilpa Patel, FBDO BSC(Hons) BCOM(Hons)

INTRODUCTION

Poor academic performance of children can negatively impact their future employment options and socio-economic status, which ultimately can deplete the economic growth of a nation. Vision is one of the complex and interrelated processes through which learning is mastered, therefore untreated visual problems may interfere with achieving full learning potential.

Refractive error (RE) is the most common vision problem that generally initiates in early adolescence. RE is considered to have a complex relationship with academic achievement. The increased accommodative effort used by an uncorrected hypermetropic to focus at near may cause transient blurring, fatigue and asthenopic symptoms, linking hypermetropia with reading difficulties, whereas an uncorrected myopic can experience interference in learning if a classroom blackboard is unclear. Anxiety through this incompetence can initiate a cycle of poor achievement.

The use of spectacles is a cost-effective solution to correct visual acuity (VA) deficits due to RE. However, prescribing for spectacles alone cannot guarantee their ownership and usage, hence an appraisal is required to find the influence of providing and using spectacles on early adolescents' academic performance. Adding an increase in global migration has resulted in children from different parts of the world studying together, therefore evaluating aforesaid influence on early adolescents from different nations needs consideration for future economic prospects of a nation.

METHOD

Academic search engines like Google Scholar and PubMed were employed for literature search and the most up-to-date published literature since 2013, which evaluated the provision of spectacles and the educational outcomes of school-going early adolescents, were considered eligible. After critical appraisal, the studies from diverse income nations were included to ensure a wider range of populations from different parts of the world were analysed for generalisation.

FINDINGS

Three out of four sourced articles were cluster randomised trials; two were implemented in China and the third was accomplished in Florida. Clustering allowed researchers to employ a large sample size. Glewwe *et al* (2018) concluded from an analytic sample size of 15,472 adolescent students that vision screening and spectacles improved the academic achievements in maths and reading. However, only the reading test had stronger statistical significance. While the intervention raised the possibility of succeeding in the standardised test by approximately 2%, researchers suggested applying appropriate follow-up actions to prevent a fading-out of the intervention's effect and to sustain academic achievements.

Ma *et al* (2014) randomised 3,177 adolescents to control, vouchers or free spectacles and compared baseline and the end-line score in mathematics over an academic year. Notwithstanding imperfect compliance, the math test results demonstrated statistically significant progress among the children receiving free spectacles. Although the variance was meagre than a pre-determined score, the authors concluded that academic achievements can be improved by encouraging the use of spectacles.



When 1,200 adolescent children with uncorrected refractive error (URE) were randomised in Ma *et al* (2018), a statistically significant improvement was found in the maths scores of the early provision group. The effect size discovered was comparable to further learning for an additional half a term. Moreover, the spectacles ownership and wear rates were found to be greater in the early provision group, however, due to self-reported data, over estimation of actual behaviour was possible.

A follow up cross-sectional study of 1,018 rural adolescent school children in an Indian district by Gogate *et al* (2013) identified that academic performance was positively correlated with a greater likelihood of being acquiescent with spectacles wear, however, the parameters used to measure academic performance, were unclear. The study found that educating on the benefits of spectacles wear may improve compliance.

DISCUSSIONS

Maximum modification in RE is experienced in early childhood through emmetropisation. The presence of RE among the subjects under study confirm that emmetropisation had not transpired in them. However, an improvement in the RE-induced reduced VA can be achieved for any school-aged children, if the optical correction is provided and spectacles are worn.

The ability to see well during study time for distance and near vision is essential to flourish in academic life, although there is no statistical proof that shows academic under achievement is attributed to URE. The critical evaluation of all included studies unified that academic performance can be enhanced by equipping children with spectacles, however, these researches only employed low- or middle-income children, making it difficult to judge if the academic performance of high-income children, privileged to access numerous additional resources, could be influenced due to spectacles. Moreover, cluster randomisation has reduced statistical efficiency compared to individual randomisation, therefore the statistical precision of the results cannot be trusted, however, most

academic performance of early adolescent

health researchers employ cluster randomisation to examine the outcome of the interventions on the betterment of health or change of lifestyle.

Gogate *et al* (2013) were able to furnish a snapshot of the academic performance at a particular timeframe after the usage of provided spectacles through follow-up cross-sectional study. However, with the complicated and bidirectional relationship between the RE and VA on one extreme and academic performance on the other, drawing cause and effect inferences from the study is difficult. Moreover, the presence of mainly myopic subjects and the possibility of underestimation of hyperopia may impose an inconclusive result. However, the study highlighted the existence of a relation between spectacles usage and academic achievement.

Furthermore, subjects of Ma *et al* (2014) were also myopic, therefore their findings were limited to myopic early adolescents. Nevertheless, a linear increase in myopic trend exists, consequential to myopic progression in the past three decades through increased indoor activities stemming from the recent 'computerisation' revolution affecting early adolescents. Therefore, although a positive association is found between myopia and education, customised spectacles are recommended as one of the means to slow myopia progression. Notwithstanding, uncorrected hyperopia is established to have an association with reading difficulties.

An individual's academic success is dependent on various components, yet none of the four studies showed how these variables were controlled. However, it is admitted that academic success is better predicted by vision-related factors than ethnicity and/or socio-economic status, hence URE can lead to an unfavourable academic outcome.

Overall, academic performance is not only dependent on mathematics, and a better portrayal of a student's educational ability is determined by their test results across all subjects. However, there is a positive interrelationship between visual dysfunction, poor reading ability and poor educational outcomes, therefore any learning obstacle

within a competitive education system can aggravate the risks of mental health problems. Hence, cost-effective reforms like spectacles are essential to improve earning potential, which necessitates improving the perceptions over spectacles and awareness among children and parents.

The imprecision and indirectness make Ma *et al* (2014) a low-certainty evidence. Moreover, self-reported data in Ma *et al* (2018) and Gogate *et al* (2013) may lead to overestimation of actual behaviour due to information bias. Glewwe *et al* (2018) advise taking caution when interpreting evidence since estimates of spillover effects on good vision students in full-treatment schools was incredibly high and programme implementation had some loopholes. Furthermore, the subjects of all studies were drawn from a small domain of large countries which limits their external validity and applicability to other settings, since the results may be specific to location, making generalisability doubtful. However, these studies, conducted in different nations, echo homogeneous results showing the possibility of a positive association between spectacles usage and educational outcome. Nonetheless, economic considerations are essential in the low- and middle-income population, hence provision of affordable or free spectacles can improve their access and longer acquisition could further improve spectacles wear, which may lead to better educational outcomes.

CONCLUSION

The learning progress of early adolescent children can be adversely affected by blurred vision, however, using spectacles can improve VA, hence students with RE should be encouraged to acknowledge that spectacles are a valuable learning asset. The judgement of academic performance should be based across the test results of all subjects, however, any obstacle to learning within a competitive education system can restrict learning. But the provision of low-cost or free spectacles can improve their acquisition, removing the barrier between vision problems and learning.

Although there is a presence of positive reciprocity amidst myopia and education, spectacles can reduce the pace of myopic progression. Moreover, correcting hyperopia can reduce reading difficulties and thus can bring benefit in academic performance.

Critical evaluation of the literature indicated a positive influence of spectacles on academic achievements, however, non-inclusion of high-income children and limited external validity of articles warrants the need of additional robust research where various variables affecting educational outcomes are controlled and subjects of all kinds from various parts of the world are included.

The research could not find any article based on subjects from the UK, however, many emigrants from the countries included in these articles, live in the UK, hence their relevance may be justified. Yet future research needs to consider including subjects from the UK to provide a clear picture of the influence spectacles have on educational outcomes on its cosmopolitan population. The results will aid in formulating policies to solve students' visual problems and stimulate their academic performance for future economic growth.

Although each article has some limitations, they provided some indicators that the use of spectacles can improve academic performance, which necessitates improving their awareness among parents and students. This gap can be successfully filled by dispensing opticians as paediatric dispensing is one of their core competencies.

A dispensing optician can effectively address concerns and advise on the benefits of effective compliance of spectacles, which may aid in achieving better educational outcomes and solve non-compliance issues. Additionally, regular follow-ups with a dispensing optician will ensure that the correction effects of spectacles have not faded, confirming the continuity of vision care in an early adolescent's academic life.

For article references, visit
<https://abdocollege.org.uk/references/>

Stepping into management

Lifelong learning is the foundation of a career in optics but what path do you take once you are qualified? Robina Moss talks to some graduates who went into management and looks at training options.

Dylan Russell is a dispensing optician practice manager with Boots Opticians in Scotland but what inspired him to go down that particular career route?

"After being in optics for seven years now I have had quite a range of different managers. I've seen both the company and the different stores I've worked in change the way they approach things and just decided that I'd like to be in a position where I was the one making those decisions," he explains.

The opportunity arose earlier than he had imagined. "Just after I finished my final exams an opportunity came up as an assistant manager in one of our flagship stores," he said.

"After doing this for six months or so I was then given the opportunity to be seconded as a practice manager in a smaller store within the region. The opportunity then came up to apply for this as a permanent position. My application was successful, and this is where I am currently."

Dylan believes that one of the best things about being a manager is "being able to be the one making the decisions that are going to help run the store in the best possible manner to give an amazing experience for your patients."

He also enjoys that every day is a learning curve. "Recently I went on the Mental Health First Aid England course,

which I would strongly recommend anyone to do," he said. "The course was eye-opening and very informative for handling different situations."

There is a downside to management though, as he highlights: "Sometimes, when working for a multiple, there are only so many changes you can make as everything has to follow the way the company does things. Luckily I work for a company that I'm in agreement with."

So, what advice would he give to someone interested in following a management career path? "Go for it, challenge yourself," he exclaims. "If you decide it's not for you, you can always go back to being a dispensing optician, however, I think a great DO usually makes a great manager."



Mark Nevey

He does have a warning for would-be managers though. "Make sure you're able to switch off. Do your best not to let your outside life affect work each day and make sure that when you finish each night, you're done until the next day.

"I'm a strong believer in leaving things at the door," he emphasises. "Work life balance is key. No-one needs a martyr and you're no use to your team if you run yourself into the ground," he warns.

Another dispensing optician who went down the management route is Mark Nevey, who was a dispensing optician and store manager working at Specsavers in Cheylesmore before leaving to gain more experience in the independent sector. He has recently moved to an independent practice in Blaby, Leicestershire, pictured, where he is a dispensing optician but still aspires to be a manager again in the future.

Ambition

Unlike many practitioners, Mark had a clear ambition to get into a management role, but it also happened a lot sooner than he had expected. "I had always harboured aspirations of managing the small Specsavers store I had achieved my FBDO qualification with," he said.

"Two years after qualifying, after discussing my options with my director, we decided that I would enrol on the Institute of Leadership and Management level 3 course and then take on the store manager position some time after that.

"As it transpired, the store needed a manager shortly after we made that decision and I was asked if I would be

willing to fill the position with immediate effect, which I did."

Like many, Mark was inspired to go down the management route for the sake of his family. "It meant more money for my small family, as well as job security," he explains, adding: "I love learning, progressing and developing in my career."

Like all roles, there are good and bad things about being in management. "The great thing about being a DO and the store manager is that when you want to make a decision about action to resolve a problem, you don't need to have it authorised by somebody else, you can make the executive decision

'do as I say'. Take a fair approach to discipline and company benefits. Be open, honest and candid in every respect, with staff and patients alike.

"I always imagined I wouldn't be cut out to manage, but I surprised myself and believe I did a good job so I would say, believe in yourself and take the plunge," he concludes.

Training benefits

To help dispensing opticians take the next steps in their career following qualification, ABDO has launched four new management courses this year; the Management and Leadership Diploma, the Management Essentials Certificate,

people struggle to develop the skills that they need to be a good manager, as Nick highlights.

Motivated

"All too often we see 'accidental managers' who, upon qualification, were given a set of keys to a practice and left to their own devices," he explains. "Whilst some may have a natural aptitude for leadership, even they will likely need to get the fuller set of management tools to ensure a healthy business and a happy, motivated team.

"These new courses from ABDO are the ideal next step for any manager, whether they are starting out, or looking to formalise knowledge and experience gained in practice.

"As a manager, you need to make time for your own development," Nick emphasises. "This investment in you will be of benefit in many ways. Management training teaches leaders how to identify and minimise risk, use data effectively and identify the best

'If you decide it's not for you, you can always go back to being a dispensing optician, however, I think a great DO usually makes a great manager.'

yourself," said Mark. "It allows you to take a more professional approach."

As expected, the worse aspects of the role can be dealing with people issues. "The bad things about management are the pressure when it comes to pleasing all the individual staff members with regard to holidays etc, and dealing with complaints and irate patients," said Mark.

What advice would he give to someone wanting to follow this career path? "Always be honest and fair," he recommends. "Lead by example and ask people to 'do as I do', rather than

the Continuing Improvement Certificate and the Growing Leader Certificate.

ABDO's sector skills development officer, Nick Walsh, explains the background to the development of the courses. "ABDO wants to help individuals to enhance their professional skills, as well as provide fantastic career development.

"For some, this could be through further study in clinical areas such as contact lenses and low vision, for many DOs though, the route that is beneficial will be management and leadership." It has often been said in optics that



Nick Walsh



possible solutions that benefit the business as a whole.”

Underlining the benefits of better training, Nick explains that managers will become better able to set realistic

and understand the effectiveness of it within the business. This enables managers to understand how they can lead their teams in the most effective way, with the end result being a

to provide feedback to motivate and increase the skill level of their people.”

He concludes: “ABDO management and leadership training is a great way to turn any informal learning into a recognised qualification through a course of study and assessment. The qualification is awarded by Chartered Management Institute, which is the only chartered awarding organisation in the UK for management and leadership.

“Participants in the course also get membership of the institute and access to the support and materials that it offers, including the fantastic ManagementDirect online resource.”

‘ABDO management and leadership training is a great way to turn any informal learning into a recognised qualification through a course of study and assessment.’

goals, develop strategic work plans and make good decisions quickly.

“Structured training will teach managers how to understand and learn about their team members to obtain the best results from each individual,” he adds.

“Training teaches managers to review their styles of management and assess

motivated and productive team with minimum conflict.”

Another benefit of the training is the structured approach to giving staff feedback. “Giving feedback is a skill of successful leaders,” Nick emphasises. “Through management training, managers can learn effective ways

For more information on the new courses, visit www.abdo.org.uk/mlt

Rachel Blazyca-White interview

Senior courses administrator Rachel Blazyca-White has been at ABDO College for over 17 years. In this article, find out more about Rachel and her role.

What does your role entail?

I work in the Courses Department at the College, dealing with the applications process. I check that applicants have the right qualifications, send confirmations and invoices and chase course fees. I also deal with general queries from students, supervisors and tutors. In addition, I deal with the booking of accommodation at the College, sending the confirmations and checking that the payments are made on time. I have also taken on tutor payments.

What do you enjoy about your role?

The College is a really lovely place to work, not only the building we work in and the beautiful countryside, but most importantly, the people I work with are fantastic.

What changes have you seen during your time at the College?

We have grown so much over the past 17 years. We run a degree course and have many shorter courses available, such as the Optical Assistant and Senior Optical Assistant courses. All courses are now run on the learning platform, Moodle. This has been a great move forward and reduces the amount of printing needed and paper used. We do not use paper application packs. All applications and information are now

on the ABDO College website and students can apply direct via the website at www.abdocollege.org.uk

What are the challenges of your role?

The new computer system and getting to grips with the online applications and learning platforms have been challenging at times but I think I can say we are getting there but still learning all the time.

What were your jobs before joining the College?

I worked at a marketing company in Whitstable, Kent, and before that I was a junior administrator for a solicitor in Glasgow.

How do you see the future for your role?

The future looks really good, not just for my role but the College as a whole. My role will be busier due to new courses and developing skills in new course areas such as the learning platforms.

When are you most busy?

The job gets very busy in the summertime. From April we open for the summer intake and it doesn't slow down until September/October.

What common questions are you most often asked?

The most common queries are regarding the requirements of the courses, the course fees, start dates and supervisor changes.

What would be your advice to students?

ABDO College runs two dispensing courses which are ideal for students if they are working in practice and want to qualify as they can be earning and learning. This is blended learning. The block release is always held in Kent, which is an amazing place to visit. Students will always be supported, not only by their personal tutors but by the lecturers at the College and the admin staff.



Rachel Blazyca-White

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