

ISLAND VISION ODA FIJI CONFERENCE SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

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Dr SARAH CROWE | OPHTHALMOLOGIST AT EASTERN EYE CARE & FOUNDER OF OOXii

The OOXii Vision Kit: An Innovative Method of Getting Glasses to Remote and Low-Resource Communities

Around one billion people worldwide are vision impaired due to lack of access to glasses, with uncorrected refractive error recognised by the World Health Organisation as a global health crisis. This interactive session introduces the OOXii Vision Kit, an innovative tool designed to deliver affordable, custom-made glasses in remote and low resource settings. The kit contains a simplified Testing Wheel capable of detecting spherical refractive errors from -8.50 to $+8.50$ and up to 2 dioptres of astigmatism, supported by a mobile app that provides offline training and step by step instructions for health workers. Participants will learn how the kit integrates standardised tumbling E charts, precut lenses and marked toric lenses that can be rotated into the correct axis, enabling rapid on-site dispensing. The session also explores the cultural and logistical context of delivering eye care in Fiji and neighbouring Pacific communities, highlighting the importance of local partnerships, language appropriate education and community led planning. Optical dispensers will gain insight into how their skills can support culturally safe, sustainable vision care programs in underserved regions.



Dr KELECHI UGWUNNA | OPTOMETRIST AT OPTIQUE EYECARE
IN SUVA, FIJI

Non-Communicable Diseases on the Refractive Status of Patients, and How It Affects Dispensing

When patients report dissatisfaction with a new spectacle prescription, the instinct is often to re-check the refraction or frame fit. However, unstable vision can be a sign of systemic disease rather than a mechanical issue. This session explores how non-communicable diseases such as hypertension, renal disease, thyroid dysfunction and, in particular, diabetes mellitus can drive fluctuating refractive errors and ocular changes. Dr Kelechi Ugwunna explains the biochemical mechanisms behind osmotic shifts in the crystalline lens, which cause the “refractive surprises” that frustrate both patients and dispensers. The presentation helps dispensers recognise red-flag patterns, such as sudden changes in prescription, fluctuating vision or unexplained discomfort and understand when to pause a dispense and refer for medical screening rather than immediately re-refracting.



SARA LEONARD | ANZ CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE &
COMMERCIAL SYSTEMS MANAGER AT HOYA

Secrets From the Lab – Tips to Enhance Lens Ordering

The relationship between your practice and the lens lab is one of the most important partnerships in optical dispensing. Labs act as an extension of your team, providing advice, troubleshooting, order processing and job updates. This interactive session, led by Sara Leonard of HOYA Lens Australia, unpacks the most common red flags in lens ordering and walks through practical workflows to improve order accuracy and reduce remakes. Participants will learn how to optimise advanced lens designs by refining wearing parameters, frame information and treatment instructions, and will explore how online ordering platforms, video centration technology and lens-demonstration tools can improve outcomes and turnaround times. The session also highlights ways to communicate effectively with labs so that dispensers can confidently advocate for their patients.



PAUL CLARKE (OAM) | OPTICAL MECHANIC, IMMEDIATE PAST ODA CHAIRPERSON & PAST IOA PRESIDENT

Small Fixes, Big Impact: Frame Repairs That Grow Loyalty and Reputation

This session explores how spectacle frame repairs, often viewed as lower-margin than new sales, can significantly enhance patient loyalty, reputation and long-term practice growth. For many patients, being without glasses is not an option, making in-house repairs a critical service that addresses a real clinical and lifestyle need. The presentation highlights common repair services and explains how these interventions restore comfort, function and visual performance. Participants will learn why having the right equipment and processes in place allows practices to respond quickly, reduce turnaround times and maintain full control over workmanship. The session also addresses the mindset shift from “replace only” to “service-first”, demonstrating how empathy, reliability and technical expertise can differentiate a practice, generate word-of-mouth referrals and support sustainable business growth.



MICHAEL NASSER | DIRECTOR AT OPTICARE & HOST OF THE FOCUSED VIEW PODCAST

Served Strong: Building a Practice With No Dilution

This highly interactive workshop is designed for business driven optical dispensers seeking to maximise clarity, standards, and commercial discipline. Rather than a traditional talk, the session uses discussion, group exercises, and real-world examples drawn from Opticare, Vision Connection, The Focused View, and broader industry experience. Attendees will explore the “edge” that well-run practices can create, uncovering where energy, effort, or margin may be unintentionally lost. The session will help participants:

- Identify areas of underperformance in their practice
- Clarify their practice's unique positioning and reputation
- Commit to one or two concrete actions to implement in the next 60–90 days

By the end, attendees will leave with practical next steps, renewed confidence, and a clearer sense of direction for sustainable growth.



Dr PEGAH NOORIZADEH | TRAINER AT AUCA & DIRECTOR OF SOUTH PACIFIC EYE CARE FOUNDATION

Privacy, Confidentiality and Data Protection

This 45-minute session examines privacy, confidentiality and data-protection obligations within the optical field, focusing on ethical and legal responsibilities for dispensers and practices. Participants will explore how patient health information is collected, stored, shared and disposed of in compliance with relevant privacy legislation and professional standards. The presentation covers practical risks such as unsecured records, over-sharing of information, breaches of consent and the use of digital platforms, and provides clear strategies for minimising exposure while maintaining high-quality patient care. It also outlines how to respond to suspected or confirmed breaches, including notification requirements and risk-mitigation steps. Optical dispensers will learn how to uphold professional boundaries, build trust with patients and align daily workflows with core ethical principles.



MATT REBEIRO | OPTOMETRIST & DIRECTOR AT THE SPECTACLE HUT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Better Together: How Optometrists and Dispensers Create Exceptional Vision Care

Optometry and optical dispensing are deeply intertwined, and their collaboration forms the foundation of high-quality patient care. This session explores how optometrists and dispensers can work together more effectively to deliver modern, patient-centred vision solutions. By understanding each other's roles, responsibilities and limitations, both professions can move beyond isolated tasks and co-create outcomes that exceed patient expectations. The presentation highlights how advances in lens and refractive technologies, combined with strong communication and mutual respect, can enhance the patient experience, satisfaction and loyalty. Matt outlines practical collaboration strategies such as shared hand-offs, consistent messaging, joint education sessions and team-based problem-solving. Attendees will leave with a clearer picture of how to strengthen their working relationships, streamline workflows and position their practice as a cohesive, patient-focused team.



NICOLE GRASSO | OPTICAL DISPENSER AT THE OPTICAL CO.
& ACOD TRAINER

Mental Health within the Workplace

This 30-minute interactive session, designed for optical dispensers, explores the unique mental health challenges faced by professionals in the optical sector. Delivered by Nicole, a qualified optical dispenser and Mental Health First Aider, the presentation examines pressures such as retail demands, workload management, time constraints and balancing clinical excellence with commercial expectations. Participants will learn evidence-based strategies to recognise signs of stress and burnout, support their own wellbeing and contribute to a psychologically safe team environment. The session combines industry-relevant insights, open discussion and practical tools, enabling attendees to reflect on their own experiences and implement simple, effective wellbeing strategies at work. Emphasis is placed on normalising conversations about mental health, reducing stigma and fostering a supportive workplace culture within optical practices.



LYN SIMEON | OPTICAL DISPENSER & MANAGER AT
TEACHERS EYECARE

Optical Dispensing Through the Decades: 55 Years in Review

Lyn Simeon, an optical dispenser with over 50 years' experience, presents a 30-minute overview of the evolution of optical dispensing in Australia. The session traces major shifts from the era of regulated licensing and manual lens crafting under state-based acts to today's deregulated, technology-driven environment. Participants will explore how early computer systems evolved into digital measuring tools, how progressive lens innovations have changed everyday practice, and how customer relationship management systems now support more personalised patient care. The presentation also examines the rise of retail chains, the growth of integrated health-care settings and the move toward patient-centred communication and service excellence. Lyn reflects on how community-focused initiatives, such as free eye checks for vulnerable groups, have expanded access and reinforced the profession's public-health role.



JACOBUS BOSHOFF | OPTICAL DISPENSER & OWNER AT
ULTIMATE EYECARE

No! You Can't Have That Frame

Frame choice should always begin with the optical prescription, not just fashion or aesthetics. This session guides dispensers through how to match prescriptions to appropriate frames, explaining why certain frame styles suit specific prescriptions and why others should be avoided. Participants will learn how to “read” a prescription, visualise how lenses will sit in different frames, and use power-cross concepts to anticipate optical and cosmetic outcomes. The presentation covers how high-index lenses can broaden frame options but also highlights situations where optical compromises or poor fit necessitate saying “no” to a particular frame. Jacobus emphasises the importance of balancing patient preference with professional judgment, ensuring customers not only look good but also see well and feel comfortable.



RAYLEEN TAMBLYN | MANAGER AT SPECSAVERS &
ACOD TRAINER

Dry Eye Management and Practical Treatments in the Optometry Practice

This session focuses on one of the most common and rapidly increasing ocular conditions seen in optometric practice, with significant implications for patient comfort, visual performance, spectacle tolerance and long-term ocular health. Optical dispensers play a critical frontline role in recognising symptoms, supporting treatment adherence and reinforcing practitioner-led management. Over 45 minutes, this practical presentation provides optical dispensers with a clinically relevant overview of dry eye disease, including its prevalence, common symptoms, and the impact of environmental, digital-device use, systemic health and lifestyle factors. Participants will then explore contemporary treatment pathways, lens- and frame-related considerations, and ways to support patient compliance during dispensing. The session remains firmly within the scope of practice, emphasising how dispensers can enhance patient satisfaction, reduce chair time and support team-based dry eye care.



APRIL PETRUSMA | ODA CEO & CO-FOUNDER OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC EYE CARE FOUNDATION

Island Vision in Practice: Opticare Excursion

This session explores how optometry practices differ between Australia, New Zealand, and Fiji, using the Opticare Excursion as a case study. Led by April and hosted by the team at Opticare The Eye Centre in Lautoka, participants will gain insight into the cultural, logistical and regulatory factors that shape optometry in Fiji. This onsite excursion highlights how island-based practices adapt to limited resources, workforce capacity, and supply-chain constraints, while still meeting the needs of the community. The session also considers what Australian and New Zealand optical teams can learn from low-resource settings to improve sustainability, collaboration, and patient-centred care. Participants will gain a clearer understanding of how cultural context and infrastructure shape business outcomes and how to apply these lessons in their own practice.



Dr SARAH CROWE | OPHTHALMOLOGIST AT EASTERN EYE CARE & FOUNDER OF OOXii

I'm Not Really Crying! Possible Causes of Watery Eyes, Management and Reasons to Refer

Watery eyes (epiphora) are often distressing for patients and can significantly affect vision, comfort and appearance. This session provides a clear overview of the anatomy and physiology of tear production and drainage, explaining how imbalances in these systems can lead to persistent tearing. Dr Sarah Crowe outlines the most common causes of watery eyes across different life stages, including obstructive, inflammatory and neurotrophic factors, and offers practical tips for identifying the likely driver in a clinical setting. The presentation also covers initial management strategies that can be supported by optical dispensers, such as appropriate lens and frame choices, and clearly outlines when signs and symptoms warrant urgent referral to an optometrist or ophthalmologist. Participants will gain confidence in recognising red-flag presentations and communicating effectively with patients and clinicians.

