Emerging trends in optometry in the Gulf of Oman and MENA regions

Optometry remains in its early stages of development in the Gulf of Oman and MENA regions although it started in Sudan as early as in the year 1954. In Oman the first batch of students graduated in 2015 from the only Optometry program available in the country. Visual impairment and preventable blindness affect large populations in these regions. While there is a need to maintain a primary care focus in professional optometry education there is also a need to consider diverse career pathways to ensure sustainable employment of qualified optometry graduates. Tradition, socio-cultural factors, technology, knowledge gaps, and economic factors and the like influence employment. For instance mostly women students join optometry programs in these regions. But due to socio-cultural factors and tradition women graduates are most unlikely to leave their country of origin for work. Graduates tend to choose government employment over entrepreneurial initiatives. Technology and allied knowledge gaps between the developing and developed nations grow ever wider escalating overdependence on the developed nations. Overdependence promotes mediocrity in professional education as it confuses imitation with replication. It also overburdens already struggling economies due to high cost of imports. Due to these contextual constraints early steps are being taken to ensure closer contextual relevance of curricula while maintaining global orientation. This presentation aims to outline the paradigm shift taking place in the design of Optometry curricula in the Gulf of Oman and MENA regions with a special focus on Optometry in Oman, and Sudan.

Biography

J F Thomas has completed his PhD from the Manipal University, India. He was awarded the Late Dr. T.M. A. Pai Fellowship to pursue his PhD. He holds Post-graduate degrees in Hospital and Health Systems Management, Philosophy and a second degree in Medical Record Science. He is the Dean of the College of Health Sciences, University of Buraimi in Oman. He is a PhD Thesis Adjudicator and Master’s Thesis Guide. He is an External Reviewer for the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority. His publications include 5 textbooks for Distance Education Programs. His invention of a Low Cost IV Trainer is under Patent consideration.

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