

EYE TALKS WEBINARS FROM NEPAL WITH GLOBAL SPEAKERS

From its early days in July 2016 as a Facebook page for academic purposes, started by an optometry student and his fellow pupils in Nepal, Mero Eye has grown very well to attract enthusiastic participation and make a mark globally.

The concept behind the name Mero Eye is simple: Mero (My in Nepali) Eye is about making people feel it as their own eye, for them to be able to see through it. Mero Eye is now a registered organisation with the Office of the Registrar of Companies, Kathmandu, under the directorship of Kapil Gautam.

Today, Mero Eye comprises various eye health professionals (especially optometrists) from different corners of the globe whose primary goal is to foster academics in optometry, develop global networking and



conduct philanthropic works. The organisation of 35 volunteer members works strictly according to the rules and regulations of the company; and similar protocols and regulations apply for members from other countries.

Currently, the team of academy researchers, universities' teaching faculties, clinicians, and corporates from around the world is led by the Mero Eye board members: founder and president Kapil Gautam; scientific chair and eye researcher AOE, Gaurish S Shrestha; editor in chief MEJM, Dr Safal Khanal; advisor, Hira Nath Dahal; and members Solu Gautam, Lhamu Sherpa and Kamal Luitel.

The organisation held its first virtual conference in Nepal titled "Advancing Optometric Education (AOE)-2021," from 6-8 March, 2021 under the leadership of Gaurish S. Shrestha (Scientific Chairman) and Hira Nath Dahal (Conference Secretary). The three-day event was inaugurated by the Director of Mero Eye, Kapil Gautam. The sponsors for the conference included Vaishno Medisales, Topcon and Nidek, Bausch+Lomb, and Silverline. Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology, Himalaya Eye Institute and Matrika Eye Centre were the supporting partners for this conference wherein several renowned speakers shared their knowledge making it a great learning experience for all who were a part of it. The event was a great success and the organisers have since decided to make it an annual affair henceforth.

In April 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic impacted the world, Mero Eye started a free online webinar, Eye Talks. So far 125 sessions have been conducted, delivered by 117 world-renowned speakers, on low vision, contact lenses, vision therapy, myopia, ocular prosthesis, public health, dispensing, investigative ophthalmology, sports optometry, paediatric optometry and research methodology. These have benefited thousands of eye care professionals as well as students.

Eminent speakers have included Prof Mark Bullimore (on myopia), Prof Paul Harris (binocular continuum), Marc B Taub (building the foundation to vision therapy), Dr Yogita Rajgandhi (the optometrist's role in rehabilitation services in low vision management), Dr Jameel Rizwana Hussaindeen (management of NSBVD), Prof

Monica Chaudhary (Soft Rose-K Lenses), Dr Premnandhini Satgunam (research), and Dr Christine Sindt (paediatric contact lenses).

Additionally, MERO has been directing the Optometry Education Upliftment Program (OEUP) in a wide range of optometric specialties. In OEUP, they have established 24+ subspecialties including Artificial Intelligence (AI), Telemedicine and Phototherapy (Syntonic) for optometric practice.

The most recent, on 11 June 2021, Eye Talks – Session 122 was a webinar on Low Vision Rehabilitation services in low vision management by Yogita Rajgandhi. Optometry students, graduates and faculty members from across the globe attended the session. The one-hour talk was followed by a question and answer segment. The response was great with active participation from the attendees, many from Nepal and from other Asian countries. There was all-round appreciation for the knowledge imparted on this wide subject in such a short time, and the way it was all so lucidly explained.

Kudos indeed to Mero Eye, started to meet simple academic sharing needs with clarity of vision and purpose. It grew with the academic development of its members to a larger purpose, and then adapted quickly to not lose momentum from the start of the pandemic. Since then, the group has expanded its academic content while extending its reach to the optometry fraternity globally.

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