



Programme: Friday 9 October

Registration – From 9.00

Lectures – From 10.00

Sleeping... with the fish.



Prof Dale Rae shares her research on sleep and circadian rhythms, and how sleep is associated with physical health (obesity, cardiometabolic diseases, HIV), mental health (depression and anxiety) and performance (workplace and athletic).

Dale is a sleep researcher in UCT's Department of Human Biology and Health through Physical Activity, Lifestyle and Sport Research Centre. She currently leads six local research projects, and is a co-investigator on an international study (Sleep CHAMPzzz) funded by the Wellcome Trust investigating sleep, circadian rhythms and mental health in adolescents. She is the director of Sleep Science, a UCT spin-off company, which aims to make sleep research meaningful to the public. Dale and her team help people to assess and optimise their sleep. Their vision is: 'thriving people through healthy sleep.'

The role of optometry in transdisciplinary health research



Prof Peter Clarke-Farr sees optometrists as uniquely positioned to contribute to transdisciplinary research, influence health policy, and improve population health. Healthcare increasingly requires integrated approaches to complex problems, and our role has expanded beyond the diagnosis and management of visual disorders to become important contributors to addressing complex broader health challenges. Examples from cardiovascular disease, endocrinology, neurology, community eye health, and artificial intelligence illustrate how optometry intersects with medicine, public health, neuroscience, education, and digital technologies.

Peter has served multiple roles in the eyecare space: Educator, public health researcher, dispensing optician, optometrist.

Climate Change, the Microbiome, and Allergic Conjunctivitis



Dr Johan van Wyk explains how environmental change, microbiome alterations, and epithelial barrier dysfunction interact to influence the development and severity of allergic conjunctivitis, and offers an updated, yet evolving, integrated model of ocular allergy in the context of a changing world.

Johan is a clinical pathologist and immunologist at Pathcare.

Seeing Like Nature: Thinking Outside



Alistair Daynes introduces the concept of biomimetics and shares how thinking outside (the box) has inspired innovations in materials used in clinical diagnostics and bio-inspired materials

used in vascular care and infection control. Adopting a systems mindset expands our perspective on how resource efficiency, environmental health and patient care intersect.

Alistair is a biomimicry practitioner, innovator and builder; and the director of Learn Biomimicry. A leading voice in nature-inspired innovation across Southern Africa and globally, working with professionals, founders and teams to bridge the gap between natural intelligence, technology, and engineering to rethink complex challenges through the lens of nature.

Histology Printed in Light: OCT Biomarkers, Oculomics, and the Primary Care Diagnostic Paradigm



Dr Dirk Booysen covers the interpretation of OCT, which has fundamentally altered posterior segment care by making microscopic retinal histology accessible, but can be misleading when not responsibly interpreted; and B-scan, emphasizing optical reflectivity, layer-by-layer micro-anatomy, and artifact identification... which leads on to oculomics, using the retinal microvasculature and neural architecture as a direct window into systemic disease.

Dirk is an optometrist, author, researcher and lecturer.

Shining the light on antimicrobial prescribing: the clear need for stewardship practices



Dr Vicky Howell has a passion for teaching as she believes it is a vital instrument in the fight against antibiotic resistance, a huge threat to our modern health care practices. Over half of antibiotic use is unnecessary. Traditionally, antimicrobial stewardship has not formed part of the undergraduate curriculum. The indiscriminate use of antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and even anti parasitic drugs should all be considered when developing a stewardship program as they can all lead to resistance and subsequent therapeutic failure of the agents.

Vicky is a clinical microbiology pathologist at the PathCare Reference Laboratory in Cape Town. She specialised in clinical microbiology at UKZN, and holds qualifications in hygiene and tropical medicine, and anaesthetics.



Myopia Management in 2026: Deep Dive

Whether you're just starting out with Myopia Management, or want to update your knowledge (or your tech!) or the scope of myopia management options that you offer your patients, this interactive session takes a deep dive into current myopia management thinking to answer some of your questions.



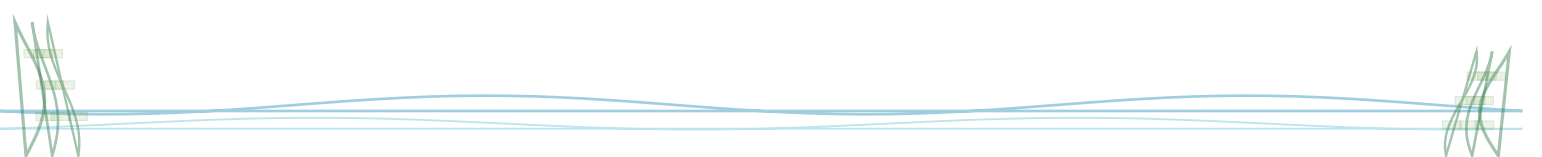
Panellists



Dr Ansunel de la Rey is an optometrist, lecturer and researcher in the Department of Optometry at the University of Johannesburg. Her academic and clinical interests include

paediatric optometry, binocular vision, visual development, ocular health and the impact of neurological and systemic conditions on visual function.

She has a particular interest in the complexities of functional vision, visual adaptation and neuro-recovery following neurological injury, including the ways in which altered visual processing can influence orientation, movement and everyday function.





Chantelle Brits is an optometrist in private practice in Randburg and has a special interest in paediatric optometry, and speciality contact lens fitting (sclerals, RGP and orthokeratology). She enjoys teaching, and has lectured paediatric optometry at UJ and has continued to further her studies through NECO and UJ/SUNY including ocular diagnostics, specialty contact lenses and is currently completing the clinical part of her ocular therapeutics qualification.



Herina Grobler holds B Optom and MBA degrees and has applied both in her career, as a clinician and in various roles in multi-national eye and healthcare companies. She is currently medical affairs specialist at HOYA Vision Care, SA where her focus is on translating scientific research and clinical evidence into practical approaches that support improved patient outcomes.



Marolize Botha is an optometrist, orthoptist, lecturer, writer and budding potter. Originally qualified in South Africa (B Optom), she is now based in the Netherlands, where she qualified as orthoptist and lectures in the Optometry Dept of the Hogeschool Utrecht. Through a combination of hospital-based, academic and clinical positions, she has gained experience across a diverse range of eye care settings and special interests. She enjoys sharing knowledge through teaching and writing, and is particularly interested in ocular pathology, paediatric eye care and strabismus surgery, premium IOL's, CLs and patient-centred clinical practice.

Programme: Saturday 10 October

Lectures – From 9.00

Lupus, the wolf in the eye



Dr John Booysen. Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is a protean disease with ocular involvement in up to one-third of patients. Because ocular signs frequently precede formal rheumatological diagnosis, the primary eye care setting is often the first point of contact. The presentation describes the easily missed or misattributed biomarkers, spanning presentations as mild as keratoconjunctivitis sicca and

episcleritis to sight- and life-threatening retinal vasculitis, choroidopathy, and optic neuropathy; when should ocular findings trigger urgent referral versus routine monitoring; and how imaging - including OCT and fundus autofluorescence - supports early, objective detection.

John is an optometrist and medical doctor currently completing his internship at Tygerberg Hospital in Cape Town. During his ophthalmology elective at the University of Oxford, he achieved a top 10% in the Duke Elder Ophthalmology Examination (FCOphth, UK) and plans to pursue a career in ophthalmology. He has authored and co-authored a journal article and reference textbook, the Southern African Guide to Topical Ophthalmic Drugs.



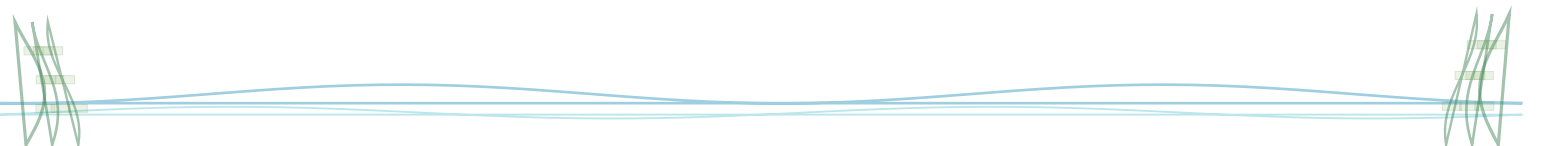
When there's something fishy with visual perception...



Dr Sharon Truter. Even when eyesight is normal, visual perceptual difficulties affect how the brain interprets visual information. Examples include visual neglect, where a person ignores one side of their visual field unless attention is

drawn there; visual agnosia, the inability to identify objects that are clearly seen; and prosopagnosia, the inability to recognise faces. These issues often result from neurological damage, such as stroke, and can impact daily activities. This presentation provides an introduction to these three disorders and provide some insights in how optometrists might be alerted to them.

Sharon is a neuropsychologist and counselling psychologist, running a private neuropsychology practice. She is an Honorary Research Associate of Rhodes University, offers training and supervision in neuropsychology and does research in cross-cultural neuropsychology. She co-authored the book '*Cross-Cultural Test Norms: An Advanced Collation from Africa*' which was awarded the 2025 Rhodes University vice-chancellor's award. She serves on her professional board at the HPCSA.



From Infection to Cancer: Exploring the Link Between HPV and Eye Cancer



Together with **Dr Saif Feroz Khan** we explore how human papillomavirus (HPV) – best known for its role in cervical cancer – can contribute to cancer development, from initial viral infection to the disruption of normal cellular processes that control cell growth and survival. HPV has been implicated in certain ocular cancers, particularly ocular surface squamous neoplasia. He shares current knowledge and evidence on the HPV–cancer connection, and hopes that viral infection could provide new opportunities for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment.

Saif has a background in biochemistry, genetics and medical cell biology. He is a post-doctoral Fellow in UCT's Prince Cancer Laboratory, researching human cell biology through basic and advanced cell and molecular laboratory techniques, in both 2-dimensional and 3-dimensional cell cultures.



GLP-1s: Flab fad or fab?



Dr John Pridgeon.

Peptides, and particularly GLP1s, are a hot topic. We hear so much about the benefits and disadvantages of these medications, from ocular complications to mental health benefits. But what does the evidence-based research say?

John is a medical and aesthetic practitioner in Gaborone, Botswana. He and his team approach each patient holistically, treating the cause, rather than the problem, to achieve optimal wellbeing.

Seth Dunlee



No fishing allowed: Inside the Immune-Privileged Eye

Ocular immune privilege is maintained through anatomical barriers, local immunomodulatory mechanisms, and active regulation of both innate and adaptive immune responses. Immune privilege, however, does not imply immune isolation. The eye must



continuously distinguish between harmless exposure, tissue injury, infection and genuine immunological threat while limiting collateral damage to structures with little capacity for regeneration. What happens when the balance between immune tolerance and immune activation is disturbed? Two familiar inflammatory conditions - Contact Lens-Induced Papillary Conjunctivitis (CLIPC) and uveitis - contrast immune activation at the ocular surface, where chronic mechanical stimulation, deposited proteins, biomaterials and antigenic exposure contribute to an inflammatory response in tissue that remains in continuous interaction with the external environment, and inflammation of the normally immune-regulated intraocular environment.

Seth is a practice owner and optometrist with interdisciplinary training in biotechnology (BSc – UP), optometry (BOptom – UJ and PGDip Therapeutics – UJ x SUNY) and ongoing advanced study in ophthalmology (TECH University). His clinical and professional interests include ocular therapeutics, ocular pathology, specialised contact lenses, diabetic eye care, and visual neuroscience.

A stroke of insight



Dr Ansunel de la Rey describes the visual aftermath of a perimesencephalic subarachnoid haemorrhage through the bifocal of clinician, and patient. When the visual world no longer behaves as expected, survival and recovery become an exercise in trial, error and adaptation. From hemianopia to visual vertigo, oscillopsia and other unexpected visual disturbances, the discussion moves beyond the diagnosis to what these changes mean in real life — negotiating movement, space and visually complex environments, developing compensatory strategies, and adapting to an altered visual world following a haemorrhagic stroke.

Luke Deutschman



Can the patient see the difference?

Most optometric practices provide eye examinations, sell spectacles, and claim excellent service. To the practitioner, the differences between them may be enormous, but can the patient see them? When consumers struggle to identify meaningful differences between competing offers, they rely on the easier commodity signals: Price, access, convenience and familiarity. And that is where commoditisation becomes dangerous.

Luke holds a B Optom (UKZN) and an MBA in Healthcare Leadership from Wits Business School. His experience spans clinical optometry, healthcare entrepreneurship, business development, strategy and elite player development. He has a particular interest in leadership, human behaviour, value creation and the changing commercial landscape of healthcare. His work increasingly focuses on understanding how healthcare organisations can remain commercially sustainable while strengthening professional value, patient experience and trust.

Sponsors/ Exhibitors

