

PRESS RELEASE

**Very good results and great appreciation
for the 4th edition of the Assottica Congress
“Contact Lens and Teenagers”
held in ROME
on Sunday 8th and Monday 9th October 2006**

The Assottica annual Meeting, the appointment devoted to contact lens practice, has seen also for its 4th edition large participation and considerable satisfaction for the results achieved and has received increasing appreciation for the formula, the quality of the speeches and the broad spectrum topics.

On Sunday Oct. 8th and Monday Oct. 9th the functional congress venue of Auditorium della Tecnica in Rome was attended by more than 650 people, of whom 450 accredited participants who followed the plenary sessions and the CME courses.

All the professionals involved showed sincere appreciation and deep interest in the possibility of exchanging ideas on topics and themes of great importance for their professional lives, cultural and scientific background, as discussed and analyzed by distinguished international speakers and well-known Italian experts.

For the 2006 edition of the Congress, Assottica has chosen a very up-to-date topic of undoubted interest, in an attempt to go in depth into the professional potentials offered by the industry and by a continuous evolving market: the world of adolescence.

Adolescence is a fascinating world with its unique features and adolescents play an increasingly important role by asserting their tastes and desires.

It is a world which offers a broad range of opportunities and combines three strategic markets: a primary market, an influence market and a future market.

Enjoying the confidence of adolescents means enjoying at the same time the trust of their parents and peers and having a chance to accompany them in the choice of visual aids also at an older age.

For young people between the age of 11 and 18 – the scope within which adolescence usually falls – contact lenses often represent the ideal solution to specific needs and expectations; they also represent an important tool to build and strengthen relationships with young people who go to the practitioner's office, making it easier to establish the first approach to them and offering them great advantages and benefits.

Therefore, during its 2006 Congress, Assottica has intended to make analysis of the opportunities and solutions offered by contact lenses in relation to one of the major segments of generational marketing which is complex but at the same time exciting.

This has been just the latest of the steps which contributed to enriching an already demanding but exciting course which was started by Assottica four years ago and which so far has obtained major results paving the way to a innovative training concept in our industry, favouring the sharing of ideas and experiences and continuously moving the target ahead.

Science and technology at the service of contact lens practice

In the agenda of the 4th Assottica Congress, the exploration of the young people's world from a psychological, sociological and relational standpoint has been accompanied by important scientific contributions linked to professional contact lens practice.

Speakers of the plenary sessions during the two days of the Congress have been the most authoritative and accredited experts in the **science of vision** and **contact lens practice** worldwide.

They contributed to "**Contact Lenses and Teens** " with their scientific and academic knowledge, their daily professional experience and ability to convey knowledge by creating involvement, confrontation and interest.

Scientific papers

The papers covering the scientific and technical aspects of contact lens practice and the related professions have been opened by a presentation of outstanding calibre by Prof. **Lamberto Maffei** who is one of the most famous experts in the field of neurosciences. He is the Director of the CNR Institute of Neurosciences and Professor of Neurobiology at Scuola Normale Superiore in Pisa. He has received international acknowledgement for the major contribution he has made to scientific research thank to his studies and innovative theories.

In his keynote lecture Prof. Lamberto Maffei deeply analysed **the relationship between vision, the brain and the environment**. The investigation of visual perceptive phenomena and the corresponding physiological mechanisms carried out by Prof. Maffei's research team led to important theoretical concepts on the development of the visual system in relation with the nervous system.

His most recent research focused on the effects of the environment and the received stimuli on the development and plasticity of the central nervous system.

The international speakers Nancy Keir, Brian Tompkins and Craig Woods took then the floor in turns with Italian speakers like Riccardo Frosini, Luigi Lupelli, Fabrizio Zeri.

In his paper titled "**Back to School in Contact Lenses**" Brian Tompkins put the focus on the most suitable ways to propose this visual correction tool to teenagers and their parents describing in an interactive and involving way how to show them benefits and advantages of CLs. He went in depth into the type of contact lenses and the type of CL wear which best fit to the lifestyle of young people.

The onset of myopia often occurs before the age of 15 or 16. Since contact lenses can provide many advantages over spectacles, especially for sports and improving self esteem, they are a popular choice for refractive correction. **Nancy Keir**, a research associate at the CCLR Center for Contact Lens Research, University of Waterloo, Canada helped to "**see the world their**

way", not forgetting that contact lenses are medical devices which require adequate selection of the wearers.

Riccardo Frosini, who is a Professor of Diseases of the Visual Apparatus at the School of Medicine and Surgery, University of Florence and is the head of the Business Unit Optics and Ophthalmology at the Careggi and Meyer University Hospitals in Florence, concentrated his speech on "**The clinical management of adolescents**" providing the audience with an interesting overview on the importance of early diagnosis on the basis of an abundant case series: from fundamental diagnostic techniques to the therapeutic approach.

Freedom of movement, higher safety in case of a trauma, better visual performance when combining perception and action, increased awareness of oneself and one's own physical appearance: these are only some of the spheres where the use of contact lenses can really make a substantial difference.

Fabrizio Zeri, a psychologist who teaches contact lens practice and psychology of perception and is doing his doctoral degree in Cognitive Neurosciences, combined his multi-year professional experience in contact lens practice with his specific skills to cover the topic of "**Physical exercise and sports with contact lenses: a real need or simply an alternative for teenagers?**"

Physical exercise and **sports** play a fundamental role in the life of teen-agers. Most visual defects and other problems linked to binocular vision may represent an obstacle to proper perception which is very important in coordinating motor acts. Piergiuseppe Tettamanti, in cooperation with Matteo Beltemacchi, sports physicians who follows the young athletes of a basketball team on a daily basis covered the topic of "**The assessment of visual acuity in the process of certifying fitness for sports**"

Luigi Lupelli, Head of the Optometry Institute in Rome tried and answered the following question: "**Can the use of contact lenses help control the progression of myopia in adolescence?**". Myopia develops and progresses mainly during adolescence. Contact lens fitting, both with the conventional approach and orthokeratology, has often been proposed as the solution to avoid such progression. The results of the studies carried out on this topic are numerous and controversial ... though less than it seems.

Even if themes of general interest in contact lens practice and scientific issues were touched upon, the attention has always been focused on adolescents with an in-depth review of the correction possibilities through contact lenses, safety, hygiene, comfort and reliability issues.

Nancy Keir then delivered a four-handed speech with Craig Woods, who is Research Manager at the Center for Contact Lens Research, University of Waterloo, Ontario, and Clinic Director at the Victorian College of Optometry. In their presentation titled "**Solutions! Solutions! Solutions! But what was the question?**" they examined an extremely important subject which is at times still underestimated: correct **contact lens care** and the various possibilities which are currently available with special reference to the different materials used in lens production and their interactions but also to the needs and lifestyle of the wearers.

The themes which was discussed in the plenary session and many other interesting ones were deeply analysed in the broad range of advanced courses held during the two days of "**Contact lenses and Teens**".

Technical and scientific one-theme courses:

COURSE 1: Nancy Keir

Unravelling the mysteries behind contact lens discomfort – I'll drink to that!

COURSE 2: Craig Woods

How to optimize contact lens care

COURSE 3: Brian Tompkins

Education, Education, Education

COURSE 4: Silvio Maffioletti and Letizia Ruggeri

Teen-agers and the use of contact lenses: possible scenarios and prospects

COURSE 5: Francesco Loperfido

Effect of allergies and drugs on the tear film and wrong contact lens care

COURSE 6: Vittorio Roncagli

Correlation between visual and postural problems in adolescents

COURSE 7: Roberto Magni

Preparation to contact lens fitting in adolescence

An innovation was the introduction - within the congress schedule – of **meetings with the main Companies** in the contact lens business. Company speakers and professionals provided the participants with an additional updating opportunity thanks to short presentations of products and technical innovations.

Good interest was finally raised by the **exhibition area**, that included all the Companies which are members of Assottica (Alcon, Amo Italy, Bausch&Lomb, Ciba Vision, Coopervision, Johnson & Johnson VisionCare, Sauflon and Schalcon). Also **equipment manufacturers** (CSO, Frastema, Meccanottica Mazza, TopCom) and **specialized publishing companies** (Fabiano Editore, Medical Books) attended the event as exhibitors thus completing the scenario of professional activities linked to contact lens wear.

Many speeches and different sessions in the plenary, seven single-topic in-depth courses repeated during the two days in order to meet the requests from participants: this is the result of the **vast training provision** which has characterized the 4th edition of the Assottica annual Meeting.

On Sunday night the beautiful rooms of **Palazzo Brancaccio** have been the ideal setting for the **Gala Dinner**, the social event to welcome and thank all the participants.

The Assottica Congress once again proves to be **a not-to-be-missed appointment** which is quite unique for its contents, structure and characteristics.

It has become **a reference point for the contact lens business**, an opportunity for meeting people and for top-level professional updating.

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