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Paper Abstracts
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From barriers to confidence: integrating student-reported barriers into a university-based myopia control training model

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Purpose: Myopia management had become an increasingly vital component of modern optometric practice. However, the readiness of optometry graduates to implement myopia control strategies, particularly in prescribing soft contact lenses (SCLs) for myopia control remained uncertain. This study explored barriers students faced in practicing myopia management and compared two cohorts, one with structured clinical exposure to SCLs for myopia control and one without, to identify and address these barriers, and assess the impact of a dedicated training clinic on student confidence and competence.
Method: Two optometry student cohorts from The Hong Kong Polytechnic University were surveyed: 2024 graduates (N = 45), who had no structured SCL myopia control training, and 2025 final-year students (N = 48), who participated in a dedicated Soft Lens Myopia Control Clinic integrating into the undergraduate clinical placement curriculum. The clinic included lectures on myopia control SCL design, fitting procedures, efficacy evaluation, and patient communication, alongside hands-on fitting experience with dual-focus SCLs. Surveys assessed clinical practices, confidence, perceived barriers, and post-graduation intentions.
Results: While 90% of 2024 graduates reported practicing myopia management after graduation, only 40% prescribed SCLs for myopia management, citing lack of knowledge (100%) and fitting skills (89%). 80% expressed a strong preference for SCLs hands-on training. While the 2025 cohort reported a pre-training confidence level of 3.38 ± 1.02 (on a 1–5 Likert scale), the dedicated clinic was rated helpful or very helpful by 84.6% with a mean helpfulness score of 4.13 ± 0.73 ($p < 0.001$), and their likelihood of prescribing SCLs for myopia management post-graduation increased to 4.41 ± 0.87.
Conclusions: This study highlighted a gap between graduate readiness and clinical expectations in myopia control SCLs. Embedding experiential learning that addressed student-reported barriers enhanced confidence and competence. The model served as a scalable, student-centred framework for integrating hands-on training into optometry curricula.

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