

NCC 'FUTURE GENERATION 2024' POSTER Abstracts
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POSTER Abstracts

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Attitudes and behaviours of UK eyecare practitioners towards fitting contact lenses for children and young people.

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Purpose: This study sought to explore the attitudes and behaviours of UK eyecare practitioners (ECPs) towards fitting contact lenses (CLs) to children and young people (CYP) under 18 years of age.

Method: An online survey was conducted with UK based optometrists and contact lens opticians (CLOs) in 2023. Example questions included: ECPs' prescribing preferences e.g. the age from which certain lens types were deemed appropriate, and factors considered important when fitting.

Results: A total of 316 ECPs completed the questionnaire, with a median of 16.0 years' experience (IQR 5.0-26.8 years). While all ECPs believed soft CLs were appropriate for persons under 18 years, the average age from which fitting was deemed appropriate was 8.6 (± 2.9 years). Out of 96.1% respondents who believed rigid CLs were appropriate for CYP, the age from which ECPs would consider fitting was significantly higher at 11.5 (± 3.6 years, $P < 0.001$). CLOs appeared more willing to fit both soft and rigid CLs at earlier ages than optometrists ($P < 0.05$). ECPs reported, on average, only 2.4% of their contact lens fits were to children younger than 8 years. When fitting, the child's age was assigned less importance by CLOs (rated 4.9/10) than optometrists (6.2/10; $P < 0.001$). CLOs also rated the

child's motivation for lens wear, the impact on a child's self-esteem, frequent damage to glasses and myopia management as more important considerations for fitting than optometrists ($P < 0.05$). Overall, the child's motivation to wear lenses was rated as the most important factor (9.1/10) while the least important was gender (1.8/10). Most respondents stated no preference for fitting a particular gender (92.2%), with the remaining favouring to fit female patients.

Conclusions: ECPs appeared more cautious about fitting rigid CLs at younger ages than soft CLs. There were observable differences in attitudes to fitting CYP between optometrists and CLOs.

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