

Making pre-registration students more successful

# Being successful as a pre-reg with a little help from Hirji

## Revision tutorials by Hirji Associates

OT talks to Professor Nizar Hirji about the Final Assessment Revision courses for pre-registration optometrists he runs as a AOP membership services benefit.

**OT:** Can you tell us what is covered in the revision courses?

**NKH:** The revision tutorials are geared specifically to the College of Optometrists Final Assessment. So they cover the relevant curriculum for the four examinations. These include "Routine", Contact Lenses, Ocular Disease and Abnormality (ODA) and Clinical Decision Making (CDM).

**OT:** How long does this take?

**NKH:** The revision tutorials are run as a three-day event. On the first day we start with a very important tutorial on "Learning to Learn".

Many students, despite repeated advice on how to revise, get into difficulties. Some find it difficult to do a day's work as pre-registration optometrists and then study effectively at home. This often means that they are anxious and sometimes start to panic as they approach the Final Assessment, which just makes matters worse. This tutorial gives them an opportunity to review their learning habits and gives them a "tool-kit" on how to study effectively and includes some lessons on "mind-mapping". We then concentrate on ODA, beginning with a "station-exam" using at least 25 slides of different ocular lesions covering the key areas of the curriculum and the actual station exam. The students then "mark" themselves as I take them through "line by line" with respect to each lesion. This is followed by a session on how to decide the urgency of referral before discussing the "red eye". Using case scenarios, a wide range of ODA subject matter is covered interactively.

Day two begins with a tutorial on understanding the 10 signs of retinal

***"Throughout the three days there is liberal use of real clinical case scenarios and video case presentations."***

disease/dysfunction followed by a review of glaucoma, cataract, diabetes and the eye, age related macular disease, uveitis and allergies. We then look at contact lens examinations, an interactive review of fitting and aftercare of both RGP and soft contact lenses and an interactive session on the ocular response to contact lens wear.

The final day consists of a review of the "routine" and CDM exams covering "do's and don'ts", a review of ophthalmic dispensing, binocular vision, occupational optometry, ophthalmic drugs and low vision, ending with real case scenarios to give students a flavour of the task they face at the CDM exam.

Throughout the three days there is liberal use of real clinical case scenarios and video case presentations of specific ocular lesions which makes the CDM much easier to do on the last day.



**OT:** What else apart from the interactive nature and the use of multimedia makes your courses different?

**NKH:** Each course is limited to a maximum of twelve individuals. This enables me to gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals and change my pace of delivery and interaction accordingly. The students also tell me that it is easier for them to discuss issues or detail that they are not clear about in a small group.

**OT:** When and where do you run these courses and how do students and supervisors get the information to apply?

**NKH:** The courses are always run in Birmingham and normally I schedule them just before the College of Optometrists' Final Assessment dates. These usually fall in July, September and December so I schedule my courses in May, July/August and



» **Nizar Hirji:** Gauges strengths and weaknesses

November. The dates, the venue and the application forms can all be found at my website: [www.hirji.co.uk](http://www.hirji.co.uk)

In a survey among members who use its services, the AOP received excellent feedback from past pre-registration optometry students who had attended Professor Nizar Hirji's revision courses before their exams. Here are some of the comments that students have made about the revision courses from the surveys:

*".... the case studies were relevant ... they were fun and the notes associated with the cases were very helpful"*

*"...the teaching style helped in organising and presenting thoughts in a logical and coherent manner - very valuable when under pressure in an exam situation"*

*"....concentrated my thoughts and directed my revision....."*

*"I would definitely recommend this course to colleagues and future pre registration students"*

*"....the video clips and the case scenarios were the best"*

*"..... it was over and above my expectations of a revision course, much better than any other I had attended."*

*"Exceeded my expectations."*