



Optometry education in Nepal: Current development and trends of service delivery

Prakash Paudel, Gauri Shankar Shrestha, Prakash Adhikari, Subodh Gnyawali

Nepalese Association of Optometrists, Kathmandu, Nepal

BACKGROUND

- Until 2001, major optometric care providers were ophthalmic assistants; who were trained for comprehensive eye care
- Basic eye care in hills and mountains, where more than 50% people live, are inaccessible¹
- About 85% people live in rural community but major eye care facilities concentrated in urban and Terai (plain) areas¹
- Optometry training emerged as a need to supply the demand of eye care and meet the goal of National Vision 2020 programme.

Fig 1: Eye care services in Nepal

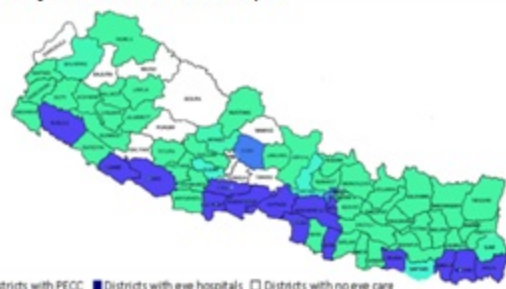
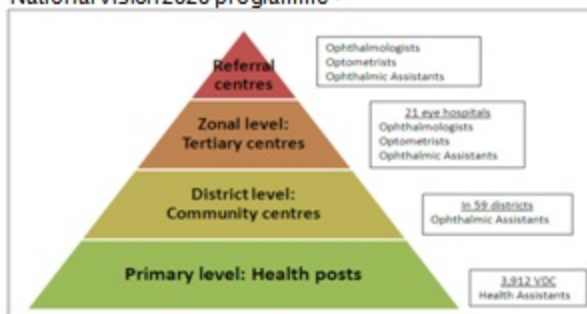


Table 1: Ophthalmic courses training and professional figures^{2,3}

Ophthalmic Courses	Start year	Training institute	HR /yr	Total No.	In practice
Ophth Assist	1981	4	30 -40	415	278
Ophthalmology	1986	4	15 -20	166	128
Optometry	1998	1	6 to 7	50	29

Fig 2: Level of eye care service recognized by Apex body for National Vision 2020 programme^{1,4}



REPORTS

Optometry Education & Profession

Strength	Weakness
Four-year academic course of International standard	Limited laboratory facilities for optics & vision science
Strong clinic and community based teaching facility	Limited training and facilities for optical dispensing
Strong medical science and public health teaching facilities	Optometry faculty retention or development
Optometrists with higher education degrees (7 PhDs, 7 MSc & 5 OD degree)	Not yet legalized optometry practice code: now on progress for approval
Registration in Health Professional Council & formation of Optometrists association	Limited resources and activities to attend international event/ conferences
Recruitment in hospital or teaching institute for academic/ clinical position	Minimal support from organization for business/professional development
Opportunity	Threat
Strong professional career development	Government inactive in its promotion
Increasing number of optometrists in PhD and MSc	Priority to other mid-level ophthalmic cadres
Appealing job offer in academic, clinical and research	Ophthalmic assistant involvement in advanced optometric care
Job offer in Middle- East, Asia and Pacific	Skill migration to developed world
Parallel entry to OD degree (in Philippines)	Professional association very inactive
Entrepreneurship in Optical business industry	Decrease in practicing optometrists no.

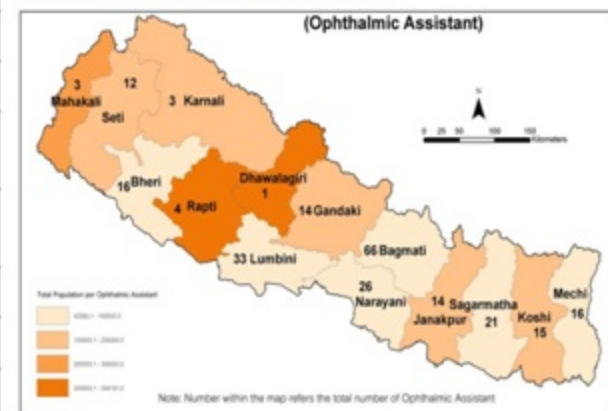
CONCLUSIONS

- Optometry is progressing slowly to get public and professional recognition.
- Optometrists' services are expanded up to zonal level. Alternatively, Ophthalmic Assistants are providing basic eye care in district and community level.
- Optometry legislation and practice code, and professional education are emergent issues.
- Optometry education and service need further expansion in the country and hence need support in such development.

- Small number of optometrists; uneven distribution and majority work in eye hospitals



- Alternatively, ophthalmic assistants provide basic eye care in primary eye care centres and hospitals



REFERENCES

- Nabin K Rai, Nepal Eye program. Tilganga Eye Centre report 2009, Kathmandu, Nepal.
- Annual report 2009. B.P. Koirala Lions Centre for Ophthalmic Studies, Institute of medicine, Tribhuvan University, Nepal
- Role of mid level ophthalmic professional in Nepal –experiences to share! Community Eye health J March 2009; 22: 69; S 119
- "Vision 2020: National plan for Action" Apex body for eye health, Ministry of Health, Nepal Government, 2005