

**“I solemnly promise to practise the art and science of Optometry with due care and with the conduct becoming an Optometrist”.**

This was the first sentence read during the Declaration of Professional Dedication by the Doctors of Optometry, during the University of Western Australia Graduation Ceremony held on 18 December 2023 at UWA Winthrop Hall. You could sense the anticipation and excitement in the room as it was the first cohort to graduate from the Degree of Doctor of Optometry in WA, alongside other graduates from the School of Allied Health and the School of Engineering.

The optometry graduates wore a black academic gown and an academic hood faced with peacock green silk, a distinct colour selected by Head of Optometry, Professor Garry Fitzpatrick. The look was complete with each student donning their black velvet mortar board, and the black tassel positioned to their left side.

And so it was, a special day for UWA, the graduates, their families, friends, Optometry Western Australia (OWA), and the optometry profession in Australia. As President of OWA, I was fortunate to be invited to be part of the stage party procession, to cheer on the 40 graduates as listed below:

Nuala Rose Boog	Ismar Kumbara
Sophie Rose Bottega	Vi Xuan Hoang Le
Linda Cai	Pey Yen Lee
Sarah Agnes Mei En Chee	Rebecca Marie Liddle
Celine Chen	Yadanar Sharon Lynch
Treyton James Coxon	Nettie Wanting Ng
Nadine Adele D'Cunha	Janette Nguyen
Songhi Dang	Georgina Moraa Nyakundi
Thi Kim Loan Dang	Nasteha Abdi Omar
Blagica Danilov	Caleb Jayakumar James Pandian
Hannah Caitlin Edgecombe	Dushika Virendri Ekanayake Pathirana
Pariya Ghanbari	Jack Henry Samuels
Dante Mirzet Amelia Gillies	Ellie Louise Schneider
Patrick Adams Elento Gutierrez	Lydia Kate Thorne
Rachel Elizabeth Harvey	Divya Michelle Urs
Teresa Hong	Joan Elizabeth Van Zyl
Rebecca Jade Howells	Wewage Umeshi Shanilka Dep
Thi Anh Huynh	Weerasinghe
Samuel Lap-Chun Koon	Julia Bernadette Wilding
Nikita Harish Kukadia	Jordan Chun Lun Yip
Shakeeta Kumar	

On behalf of OWA, I would like to express my sincere congratulations once again on their achievement and welcome them to our wonderful optometric community that we have here in WA.

After the conferral of awards, I was invited by the Chancellor to the lectern, alongside the student representatives, Dr Sarah Chee and Dr Ismar Kumbara, and Professor Garry Fitzpatrick, to join the upstanding Doctor of Optometry Graduates, in reading the oath.

The Valedictorian for the evening was one of our own, Dr Pariya Ghanbari. In her address she shared four lessons that she learned from her university years.

**Lesson number 1 is to embrace our fears and uncertainties** (whilst taking a risk with a brand new course at UWA, and the challenges of COVID-19... it's about moving forward).

**Lesson number 2 is to take our failures as learning opportunities** (quoting the singer Rihanna "Never a failure, always a lesson", Pariya shared that mistakes are valuable moments for reflection and growth).

**Lesson number 3 is to share our knowledge with others and learn to work effectively as a team** (Pariya describes sharing knowledge as being like hosting a communal feast – everyone brings a dish, and we all leave richer for it, plus it's way more fun).

And finally, **lesson number 4: to realise the power of saying 'Thank you'** (as it's a celebration of appreciation and humility. Pariya reminded the audience to always carry gratitude in their hearts).

Pariya finished with a sunset metaphor to her peers that is too beautiful not to repeat: "As we leave UWA, let's view it as a magnificent sunset, leading to the sunrise of our future adventures, filled with new challenges, achievements, and endless possibilities".

The Honorary Doctoral Degree of The University was presented to a local optometrist who was innovative and influential, in particular to the development of contact lenses worldwide. This distinguished award was created to give public recognition to individuals for outstanding achievements in any recognised field of endeavour with strategic connection or relevance to the University, either at the State level or beyond. The proud and humbled recipient was Mr Donald Ezekiel AM. Once again, I congratulate and applaud Don.

Don expressed his gratitude for the University's decision to confer the honorary degree and gave a lengthy speech about his journey and his life dedicated to the world of contact lenses.

He passed on life's lessons to the graduates that day and finished with, "you may not progress along simple straight lines, but with determination you will make a contribution to the world, no matter how small or big that contribution may be, it will be your very own legacy, the most indelible of your steps along your journey".

Pro-Chancellor, Ms Sue Murphy AO, who presented the award to Don, read the following citation:

"Mr Donald (Don) Ezekiel AM is an innovator, entrepreneur, healthcare professional and trailblazer. Don has actively sought out opportunities to extend his knowledge internationally and brought new skills and ideas home to Western Australia, where he quietly grew a productive export business selling contact lenses to the world.

Through leading a successful export orientated business, Don was able to introduce new specialised products to patients in Australia and in more than 20 countries.

Don's innovations include the use of rigid gas permeable materials for scleral lenses, which allows greater corneal oxygenation: the lenses therefore could be worn for longer. Through joint partnerships, he developed what was reputedly, the world's first foldable intraocular lens made from a hydrogel material, the key advantage of which was that a smaller limbal incision was needed to insert the lens into the eye.

Don has made a significant and lasting contribution to the optometry profession and patients who benefited from more comfortable contact lenses and better protection for the long-term eye health of the wearer.

At the same time, Don maintained a family optometry practice, caring for patients and providing them with the best vision correction options. This award reflects the culmination of a lifetime of achievement that began when Don completed his Optometry Board of WA Diploma of Optometry through coursework studies at UWA in 1957."

Don leaves his legacy to OWA member Mr Damon Ezekiel who runs Ezekiel Eyes, specialising in contact lenses, and continuing the high standard of service that his father provided.

I'd like to wish all optometrists the very best in their future endeavours. The association is there for you, for every step of your career. We look forward to meeting each of you in the upcoming OWA events, and in creating an environment for you to foster your skills and soar to new levels.

A copy of the Oath is shared below. May it stand as a reminder to the graduates, and an inspiration to the other Western Australian optometry peers.

### **Declaration of Professional Dedication**

(Doctor of Optometry)

I solemnly promise to practise the art and science of Optometry with due care and with the conduct becoming an Optometrist. I commit myself to serve humanity and to support the ideals and commitments of my profession. In pursuit of excellence, I pledge to enhance the well-being of my patients by upholding the following principles:

- I will maintain the highest standards of professional behaviour, promoting the values of global citizenship, ethical practice, and culturally safe healthcare delivery.
- I will abide by the professional code of conduct, consistently upholding the highest standards of ethical practice in all aspects of my work.
- I will treat each patient as an individual, showing them unwavering respect, empathy, and understanding. I will actively listen to their concerns with patience and compassion.
- I will act in the best interests of my patients, providing patient-centred care that is based on sound clinical judgement, current evidence, and aimed at achieving the best possible outcomes.
- I will strive to provide healthcare services that are inclusive. I will treat all those I serve equally, fairly, and with respect, without any discrimination based on gender, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, or political beliefs.

- I will empower my patients to make informed decisions aligned with their values and beliefs.
- I will uphold patient confidentiality and respect their autonomy in healthcare choices.
- I will strive to continuously enhance my understanding and skills throughout my professional

life by engaging in ongoing professional development and self-reflection.

- I will collaborate effectively with other healthcare professionals, embracing a multidisciplinary approach to meet the complex needs of my patients.
- I recognise that optometry is a global profession and that I have a role to play in promoting the health and well-being of people around the world. I will advocate for the importance of preventative eye care, sharing my knowledge and experience to contribute to the growth and advancement of the optometry profession.
- In all my professional interactions, I will strive to be a role model for others, demonstrating the values of integrity, honesty, and accountability, whilst also working to promote the broader goals of public health and social justice.

Above all else, I will do no harm to my fellow human beings and especially to my patients. I make this declaration solemnly, freely, and upon my honour.



**Stephanie Bahler, President  
Optometry Western Australia**