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EDITORIAL

Tribute to Professor Brien A. Holden, OD, PhD, DSc (1940–2015)



Tributo al Profesor Brien A. Holden, OD, PhD, DSc (1940–2015)

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Editor-in-Chief Journal of Optometry

The morning of July 28th in Europe we were shocked with the death of Professor Brien Holden. Over that day and the following days and weeks, we have read several messages of condolence from the World scientific community, highlighting the profile of the man who was a “Giant” in every sense of the word.

For most of us who devoted our research and teaching activity to contact lenses and ocular surface, this name has been present in our lives since the first minute. Of course all of us have cited several times the landmark paper from Holden and Mertz (1984) which set the long-lasting criterion for the oxygen needs of the cornea under contact lens wear. No less relevant has been the paper on the corneal changes under extended wear published in 1985.

Dozens of other critical papers have been published by Professor Holden and his collaborators in the almost 40 years since he setup the Cornea and Contact Lens Research Unit (CCLRU) in 1976. It was here that I started my research training in 1999 during a fellowship supported by the Spanish Ministry of Education. Indeed, everyone working in contact lens practice and ocular surface will know and probably use the CCLRU Grading Scales in their daily practice. Further details about the immense curriculum of Brien can be found elsewhere.¹ Most of us are also familiar with the involvement of the CCLRU (and later the Cooperative Research Center for

Eye Research and Technology CRCERT) in the development of silicone hydrogel lenses as launched in 1999 and his current activities in the fight against preventable blindness around the developing World.

But in my opinion, it is also very important to highlight a less known part of his activity that reflects his interest in bringing science to clinical practice so as to strengthen the evidence supporting our professional work. I’m talking about his PhD thesis written while at City University addressing the topographic changes induced by orthokeratology lenses. It took another 25 years for orthokeratology to become a generally accepted practice, but his contributions were important to begin the paths of development needed to address the challenge. At that point, Brien was also interested in the role of orthokeratology in myopia control, an area the he and his team have returned to over the last few years. Another major initiative for which he is responsible is the establishment of the International Centre for Eyecare Education (ICEE) in 1998, a structure devoted to preventing blindness worldwide, that, in 2012 became the Brien Holden Vision Institute Foundation. Last but not least, the International Association for Contact Lens Educators (IACLE) needs to be mentioned as one of the most important accomplishments of the CCLRU staff under the leadership of Brien. I personally have to thank this organization for helping me to start teaching contact lens practice at the University of Minho (Portugal), after my fellowship at CCLRU. It was through IACLE that I met other kindred spirits and learned

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1. [Peripheral refraction and higher-order aberrations with cycloplegia and fogging lenses using the BHVI-EyeMapper.](#)
Bakaraju RC, Fedtke C, Ehrmann K, Falk D, Thomas V, Holden BA.
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2. [The Global Burden of Potential Productivity Loss from Uncorrected Presbyopia.](#)
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Ophthalmology. 2015 May 28. pii: S0161-6420(15)00366-8. doi: 10.1016/j.ophtha.2015.04.014. [Epub ahead of print]
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3. [The Charles F. Prentice Award Lecture 2014: A 50-Year Research Journey: Giants and Great Collaborators.](#)
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PMID: 25951477
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Figure 1 Extract of the list of most recent papers authored by Professor Brian A. Holden as retrieved on July 28th from Pubmed-Medline database.

the key elements necessary to begin this part of my life. The quality of the educational materials produced by that team certainly improved my teaching abilities as a young lecturer as I am sure it has done for many others around the World.

Journal of Optometry is very proud to be the recipient of several papers co-authored by Professor Holden including his most recent publication, indexed in Pubmed in July 2015 (Fig. 1), the same month it was published in Optometry and Vision Science his lecture given when he received the Charles F. Prentice Award by the American Academy of Optometry² in 2014.

During his life, Brien has received much prestigious national and international recognition, including the Charles F. Prentice Medal, Schwab Social Entrepreneur Award for Africa from the World Economic Forum and the British Contact Lens Association Medal, among many others. As he would always recognise whenever he received an award, all

these achievements were possible because of the network of scientists and support staff working with him over the years. For that reason, this tribute is also dedicated to all of those who will miss Brien the most after a long time of intense scientific collaboration and close friendship. As he said during the Charles Prentice Medal Award presentation,² many researchers were keystones on which he built his work. The result was the creation of the Giant that Brien was and will ever be for the optometric profession and community of visual scientists.

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