

## THE RX PAD

# A Fresh Vision for Philippine Optometry

PODS' most important advocacies are the protection of professional autonomy and the promotion of independent practice. As PODS president, I am committed to fully pursuing these objectives during my tenure, and beyond.

What ties these two goals together is the advancement of the community's vision health. Professional autonomy ensures that optometrists will be guided in their practice primarily by what is in the patient's best interest. Other factors (financial etc.) should not override this consideration. Independent practitioners, although not immune from these extraneous factors, are in the best position to control them. They are not subject to such pressures as would be the case in non-independent settings.

I believe these main advocacies should not only be addressed to practitioners but also optometry students. The latter are still open to new ideas and are relatively idealistic. And they have yet to be lured by the siren song of instant employment and income post-graduation. And when they learn that being on their own (but with a support network like PODS) can be more lucrative, the lesson will not be easily discounted. We should bear this in mind as we plan our programs and projects going forward.

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*Dr. Jehan Z. Echavez,  
PODs President*

# PODS @ Work

*PODS was featured on the November 2021 issue of Cookie Magazine, a monthly publication devoted to things optometry.*

The article focused on PODS' advocacy on independent practice. Dr. Jehan Echavez, PODS president, stated this as one of the reasons that motivated the founding of PODS.

**“We banded together to address the seeming erosion of professional independence that has been negatively impacting the overall quality of vision care in the country,” she states in the article.**

The issue could be accessed through [www.cookie magazine.org](http://www.cookie magazine.org)

Furthering its goal of enhancing the technical proficiency of ODs, PODS is conducting one of its most important activities, “Binocular Vision From All Angles”, an intensive virtual lecture and workshop led by Dr. Kate Gifford from [myopiaprofile.com](http://myopiaprofile.com) and Prof. Vanessa Moodley from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, leading binocular vision practitioners, researchers and lecturers.

The lecture and workshop will run from November 16, 2021 to March 2, 2022. PODS conducted an online information session on the workshop on November 8, 2021 and many practitioners, students and optometry academics expressed interest in registering.



We are in the process of setting up a PODS Secretariat. We envision this place to be where PODS will manage its programs and activities as well as be its communication and document hub. We are going to hire an assistant who will attend to PODS matters and liaise with members. The Secretariat will go a long way toward making the organization more efficient and responsive to its members' needs

## PODS IN THE SPOTLIGHT



### DR. CARMEN ABESAMIS-DICHOSO

The World Council of Optometry (WCO) has partnered with CooperVision to host a virtual, global event geared toward myopia management. The event, entitled “Myopia Management: Putting It Into Practice,” will be held Feb. 12, 2022, and will advance the organization's ongoing efforts to establish a global myopia management standard of care.

Leading the session will be several experts in the myopia management field, including: Carmen Abesamis-Dichoso, Thomas Aller, Philip Cheng, Kate Gifford, Nicola Logan, and Sara McCullough.

For more information:  
<https://lnkd.in/eAY67xQ9>



## What's in a name?

*On deciding our group name, two things stood out.*

First is the literal abbreviation of PODs, which stands for Professional ODs Society. That's as straightforward as it gets.

The second is a play on several definitions of "pods" which our group took a liking to:

1. a protective container or housing
2. a number of animals (such as whales) or small group of people clustered together

We hear phrases like "two peas in a pod" to mean something so similar or indistinguishable. That speaks to us.

We also hear of pods as a cluster of animals or people who are together for support, protection and growth. That speaks to us, too.

We believe our group is a cluster of like-minded people brought together by shared values and a common vision of seeing Philippine optometry to its highest potential.

This is PODS.

## PODS statement on comments by an MD

The Professional ODs Society, Inc. (PODS) notes with concern recent events surrounding a comment by a medical doctor on social media that optometrists are not doctors and that they only measure the grade of the eyes - "Sumusukat lang sila ng grado ng mata.". This, and related inaccurate statements made by this doctor, prompted numerous optometrists to comment on her post and cite the falsity of her statement that optometrists are not doctors and confront her with the inaccuracies of her other related statements. As a result of the negative feedback she received, the doctor apologized for her "callous and irresponsible remark that optometrists are not doctors." Her apology was affirmed by her professional group, Konsulta MD, which also made a separate social media statement.

All's well that ends well? Not quite.

While PODS is elated at the positive resolution of this event, it also notes that the pernicious misconception that optometrists are not doctors is one that persists in the minds of many. The law, primarily the Revised Optometry Law of 1995 (RA 8050), is clear: optometrists are primary health care professionals (sec. 2) and that graduates of the six-year optometry curriculum are bestowed the title of Doctor of Optometry (sec. 19 ( c )).

Optometry counts among its practitioners many in the frontlines who are the first ones to be consulted on vision care issues. Their services are of such a critical nature that PODS successfully lobbied the IATF, at the height of the COVID-19 lockdown in the country, to declare optometric services as essential, leading to the re-opening of optometric clinics. But the battle to win hearts and minds continues.

Opening people's eyes (pun intended) to the fact that optometrists are eye care doctors, and to repose trust on them as such, will go a long way toward providing access to quality and affordable vision care. Optometrists themselves have a significant role to play. They should conduct themselves with the highest degree of competence, professionalism and empathy so as to win people's trust and confidence and dispel false information. PODS is committed to instilling such positive mindset among its members and to upholding optometrists' stature as eye doctors.

Our Website is live! [www.professionalods.com](http://www.professionalods.com)