



## 8<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF BEHAVIOURAL OPTOMETRY

**Speaker:** Kovin Naidoo  
**Credentials:** CEO, Brien Holden Vision Institute  
**Time/Date Scheduled:** 1530 – 1700 on Thursday, 26 April  
**Location:** Plenary

**Biography:** Professor Kovin Naidoo is the CEO of the Brien Holden Vision Institute. He is an academic, former anti-apartheid activist and political prisoner, optometrist and an internationally celebrated public health leader. His professional life has been dedicated to delivering eye care to people in need.

Prof Naidoo is a member of the Board of Trustees of the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, Associate Professor of Optometry at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN), and Adjunct Faculty at Salus University in Philadelphia. He is also Director of Our Children’s Vision, a global campaign working to upscale, accelerate and expand access to eye health services to all children.

Prof Naidoo has published extensively in epidemiology and public health. Recognizing the need to develop research capacity in Africa, Prof Naidoo initiated the formation of the African Vision Research Institute. Prof Naidoo is a member of the World Council of Optometry Executive committee; Founder and Chairperson of African Vision and former Chairperson of the Red Cross Air Mercy Services Board of Trustees, among his many esteemed affiliations.

Prof Naidoo is a Fulbright Scholar and was elected as an Ashoka Fellow and a Schwab Fellow and was jointly awarded with Professor Brien Holden the Schwab Social Entrepreneur Award for Africa 2010, at the regional World Economic Forum in Tanzania because of his ability to merge business acumen with social causes.

The American Academy of Optometry awarded him the Essilor Award for outstanding contributions to Optometry in 2010, and the British College of Optometrists an honorary fellowship in 2009 for his contribution to the development of optometry in Africa and the developing world. He was African Optometrist of the Year in 2002, International Optometrist of the Year in 2007 and most recently, he has been awarded the American Academy of Optometry’s Henry B. Peters Memorial Award in Public Health and Environmental Vision for 2016.

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**Presentation Title: Myopia: A Crisis in Waiting**

**Abstract:** Globally, myopia is the leading cause of distance refractive error which was found to affect 45 million people (27% of the world's population) in 2010, with a prevalence over 80% in several Asian countries. High myopia is now recognised as one of the causes of irreversible vision loss due to blinding complications like myopic macular degeneration, cataracts and glaucoma. Research on the trends in myopia shows that the prevalence of myopia will increase to over 50% of the world's population by the year 2050 with around 10% having high myopia. It is estimated the global total direct cost of lost productivity due to vision impairment from myopia is approximately USD392 billion (USD143 – 971 billion) in 2015.

The catastrophic implications of this economic burden necessitates swift action in myopia control. Education forms the core of myopia control efforts. While numerous optometrists consider that they are making a significant impact in providing standard spectacles and contact lenses, a paradigm shift is necessary to explore solutions beyond conventional approaches. Advising patients on lifestyle modifications, considering specialist contact lens methods and using pharmaceutical agents may be necessary to curb the substantial potential for myopia progression.

Detection of myopia forms the basis of any approach to myopia control. As child eye health is an important issue due to the impact poor vision can have on a child's educational and social development, collective global approach is needed to alleviate the potential burden myopia progression has on the individual, the national level and the global community. Our answer is the "Our Children's Vision" campaign.

The campaign is a five-year initiative that acts as a catalyst to drive the change needed to achieve universal access to eye care for children (in both the developed and developing world). The campaign's primary focus is school aged children between 5-18 years of age. The aim of the campaign is to provide 50 million children with vision care and for eye health to be integrated in school health programs. The campaign works with local partners to provide screening, eye exams and treatment. It is able to do this by developing coalitions, calling on local expertise, creating local networks and referral pathways. The funding sourced for the campaign will be used to provide spectacles and assistive devices to all children who need it.

It is envisaged that the screening of 50 million children will act as a catalyst and create the paradigm shift needed to create systems change through the integration of children's vision and eye health in school health programmes.