

The First Specialty Contact Lens Summit is held in Nairobi, Kenya (21–22 February 2026)

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The 1st Specialty Contact Lens Summit, held in Nairobi on 21–22 February 2026, marked an important milestone for optometry in the region. The event brought together clinicians, educators, industry partners, and students to discuss advances in specialty contact lens practice, with a strong focus on improving clinical skills in the fitting and management of specialty lenses.

With generous support from VOSH/International, six optometry students of the VOSH Student Chapter at Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (SVOSH-MMUST) participated in the summit. VOSH/International also partnered with the summit as a supporting organization, demonstrating its continued commitment to strengthening optometry education and professional development in the region.

The summit provided a valuable platform for students to engage with experienced practitioners, gain exposure to emerging technologies in specialty contact lenses, and participate in discussions on clinical decision-making for complex cases. Such experiences are critical in bridging the gap between theoretical learning and real-world clinical practice.



“The summit was an inspiring experience that exposed us to advanced contact lens technologies and clinical approaches we rarely encounter during routine training. It has motivated many of us to develop deeper expertise in specialty contact lenses.”

— **Faith Wanjugu, President, SVOSH-MMUST**

Image 1 MMUST FACULTY, ALUMNI AND STUDENTS WITH SUMMIT ORGANISERS

The origins

The Specialty Contact Lens Summit emerged from MMUST's progressive development of contact lens services. In 2021, with support from VOSH/International, MMUST established its contact lens clinic. By 2024, the clinic's growth highlighted the need to expand into specialty contact lens practice, particularly for the management of complex corneal conditions such as keratoconus.

With guidance from Prof. Jörgen of Sweden, an adjunct professor at MMUST, the foundations for this advancement were laid. MMUST subsequently reached out to the Contact Lens Laboratory in South Africa, which generously provided specialty lens fitting sets. However, it became evident that structured training was essential to effectively utilize the sets.

The initial plan to organize a small workshop for approximately 20 optometrists was quickly reconsidered due to the high level of interest. Drawing inspiration from Prof. Jörgen's and Dr. Daddi Fadel's experience as co-chairs of the first Specialty Contact Lens Summit held in Rome in 2024, the original idea was expanded into a full summit to accommodate a larger audience and maximize regional impact.

The regional and international participation



Image 2 SUMMIT PARTICIPANTS

The response exceeded expectations with over 100 participants attending from Kenya and beyond, including representatives from Nigeria, Ghana, Uganda, South Africa, Algeria, Tanzania, Kazakhstan, Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Italy, and Canada. This diverse participation underscores the growing regional and global interest in specialty contact lens practice and the importance of such platforms for knowledge exchange. Efforts were made to subsidize student registration fees and maintain affordability for practicing optometrists.

Leadership Reflection

Serving on the organizing committee for the inaugural Specialty Contact Lens Summit was both challenging and rewarding. Coordinating across multiple stakeholders, including clinicians, academic institutions, industry partners, and supporting organizations such as VOSH required careful planning. The success of the summit reflects the dedication and collaborative efforts of the organizing team, who worked tirelessly to deliver a high-quality scientific and professional program.

From a leadership perspective, this experience reinforced the importance of strategic partnerships, clear communication, and teamwork in executing impactful professional events. It also highlighted the growing interest and need for specialized training in contact lens practice within the region.



Image 3 ORGANISING COMMITTEE

“Being involved in organizing the first Specialty Contact Lens Summit was both challenging and rewarding. It demonstrated the growing interest in specialty contact lens practice in our region and reinforced the importance of collaboration in expanding professional training opportunities.”

— Dr. Sheilah Nangena, Faculty Advisor, SVOSH-MMUST

Lessons Learned

- There is a strong and increasing demand for training in specialty contact lens practice across the region.
- Student participation in professional meetings significantly enhances learning, confidence, and career motivation.
- Partnerships between universities, NGOs, and professional organizations such as VOSH are essential in creating meaningful opportunities for student development.
- The summit highlighted the importance of building strong professional networks in specialty contact lens practice. Such networks are essential for continuous knowledge exchange, mentorship, collaboration, and ultimately for advancing the growth and sustainability of the speciality within the region.

Future Plans

Building on the success of this inaugural summit, there is strong enthusiasm to continue organizing similar events with broader participation and expanded hands-on workshops. These initiatives will further strengthen clinical competencies in specialty contact lenses and contribute to improved patient care, particularly for individuals with complex corneal conditions.

Acknowledgement

The SVOSH-MMUST Student Chapter extends sincere gratitude to VOSH/International for its continued support in enabling students to participate in professional activities that enhance their training and inspire their future careers in optometry.

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Image 4 MMUST FACULTY