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Challenges of optometry in SAARC

Milan Rai

Teerthanker Mahaveer University, India

SAARC (South Asian Association For Regional Co-operation) is the geopolitical and intergovernmental union of eight nations of South Asia. The member countries are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The study was carried out to identify the extent of optometric services for future reference to implement the effective ways to uplift primary eye care services in SAARC. Optometry is seen as a core field for overcoming the barriers and challenges of eye care aspects especially at the primary level in this region. Published literature was attentively accessed using pub med and the studies published from 2000A.D to 2017 A.D were included. In addition to this, socio-economic determinants and malpractices of the communities were systematically studied. An eye care sector environment assessment was also done looking into human resources and infrastructure. Lack of awareness regarding basic eye care services due to low literacy rate is one of the most important challenges of this sector. The ratio of total population to be served to the total allied eye care professionals is excessively large which is 99852:1. The number of academic institutions providing optometric knowledge is extremely less in comparison to the growing population growth rate. The high line of existing poverty has affected economically and socially. The distribution of eye care services is not inappropriate proportion geographically. Geographical hindrances have resulted in poor access to the services and communications. The superstitious malpractices are deeply rooted in rural societies. An absence of effective regulatory bodies and their regulations through constitutional provision have become the big challenge. Effective regulations from government and awareness programs are needed to be implemented along with the establishment of more number of academic institutions.

raimilan054@gmail.com

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