



dispensingoptics

January 2009



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Cover point

have to put it at its politest 'fallen on deaf ears'.

ABDO Subscriptions

In contrast, the ABDO Board discussed the annual subscriptions back in September and took the view that we would have to keep costs down and any increase to subscriptions to a minimum. This we have achieved. In addition we have been able to keep our PI insurance rates level for the seventh year in a row, this reflects well on all of our members and their professionalism as our claims record is outstanding.

It is also important to point out that we are continuing to look at ways to increase our external sources of income to help fund the Association. The growing success of our overseas examinations is a clear example of this. The Association is deeply indebted to those members who give of their time to work on these projects and whose contribution is of benefit to all of the membership.

Partnerships

In recent months we have reported on the increased co-operation between the optical bodies. We are now in the process of appointing members to sit on a number of joint committees (AOP, ABDO and FODO) This joint working has much to commend it and the President and Board will be discussing how to develop areas of co-operation in the year ahead. I will report back on this during the year.

News Editor

Nicky Collinson has joined *Dispensing Optics* as News Editor responsible for writing and editing the news section of the journal. Nicky is an experienced journalist in the optical field and I welcome her to the successful team at *Dispensing Optics*.

Tony Garrett ■

GOC Fees

The announcement of the 2009 fees for the GOC came as a nasty shock to all. I know that the ABDO members on the GOC, along with their other professional colleagues, argued forcibly on behalf of all the registrants. Indeed, in the end, the final increase was about half of what was originally proposed!

In addition, we have strongly argued for the option to pay in stages throughout the year allowing members to spread the load. Sadly the GOC cannot implement the necessary rule changes in time for 2009 when it is most needed. However, we have been assured that this measure will receive active consideration for the following year.

At this point it is perhaps worth asking: where is all the money going? The answer is simple, most of the increase is to pay for the increased regulatory burdens being placed upon the GOC by the Government. All of the optical bodies have warned the Government that continually demanding changes and increases in regulation can only come at a cost, but the warnings

ABDO actively works in conjunction with:



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Shedding light on reflections

This article by Charles Marguet FBDO (Hons) SLD investigates the theory behind reflections and coatings and highlights the latest technological advancements and products available today

Competences covered:

Optical appliances

Target group:

Dispensing opticians, optometrists

In an average day, a large number of spectacle wearers in the United Kingdom suffer from troublesome reflections on several occasions:

- On a winter morning in dimly lit conditions,
- Later on in the office, working at a VDU under fluorescent tubes,
- At night, driving home, watching television, playing snooker, and so on.

Anti-reflection coatings allow more light through the lens, increasing contrast and therefore visual acuity. Sadly, anti-reflection coatings are not as widely dispensed in the United Kingdom as in Germany, or Japan.

Reflections

Reflections of light arising from the front and back surfaces of lenses of spectacle wearers can be troublesome, if their incidence and effects are not seriously limited, or possibly eliminated.

These light reflections can create ghost images, which can distract both the wearer, and an observer.

Jalie¹ states that the criteria for a ghost image to be observed are:

- The light must be bright enough to stand against the background illumination
- The ghost image lies close to the fixation line,
- The vergence of the ghost image leaving the lens must be similar to the power of the lens (or capable of being focused by accommodation).

At night car headlights and street illumination appear very bright against a dark background, causing dazzling reflections.

Patients spending a lot of time in front of a VDU screen may suffer from asthenopia, as the wearer struggles to view the monitor, battling the glare. Symptoms of asthenopia include tired, dry eyes and blurred vision.

Using these examples, five main types of spectacle lens reflection can then be derived, shown in **Figure 1**.

Reflection 1 arises when the light

source is in front of the lens, hence is very significant. Although it has a low intensity, it can be easily observed.

Light can also be reflected by the cornea, and then by the front or back surface of the lens, giving rise to reflections 2 and 3 respectively.

Finally, light can be reflected by the front or back surface of the lens, from sources behind the spectacle wearer. It is assumed that the lens diameter must be large enough to collect such reflections, as it can sometimes be the case with sunglasses.

These reflections are 4 and 5. Jalie¹ explains interesting cases of these reflections occur when the face is strongly illuminated and the wearer may then see an image of his/her eye and the surrounding portions by reflection.

Lens materials

The brightness of the ghost image, hence the intensity of the surface reflections is increased with the refractive index of the lens material.



This article has been approved for **1 CET point** by the **GOC**. It is open to all FBDO members, including associate member optometrists. Insert your answers to the six multiple choice questions (MCQs) on the answer sheet inserted in this issue and return by **13 February 2009** to **ABDO CET, Courtyard Suite 6, Braxted Park, Great Braxted, Witham CM8 3GA** OR fax to **01621 890203**, or complete online at **www.abdo.org.uk**. Notification of your mark and the correct answers will be sent to you. If you complete online, please ensure that your email address and GOC number are up-to-date. The pass mark is 60 per cent. The answers will appear in our March 2009 issue.



C-9324

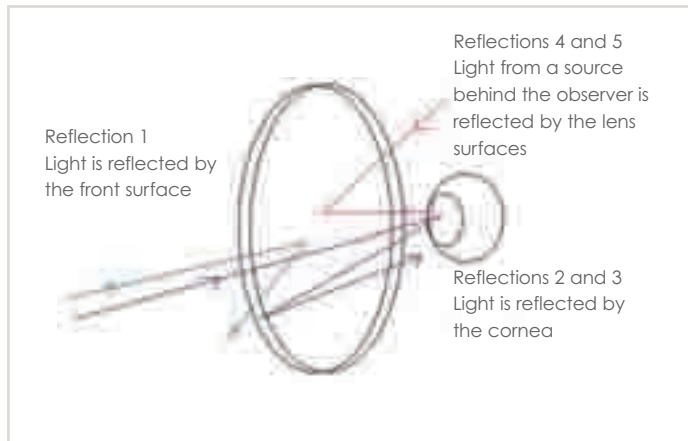


Figure 1

Refractive Index (uncoated lens)	Surface reflectance	Light reflected by front and back surface	Light transmitted through lens
1.5	4.00%	7.84%	92.16%
1.59	5.19%	10.11%	89.64%
1.67	6.30%	12.20%	87.80%
1.74	7.29%	14.05%	85.95%
1.8	8.16%	15.65%	84.35%
1.9	9.63%	18.33%	81.67%

Figure 2

The reflectance ρ of a lens surface can be calculated by the formula:

$$\rho = \left(\frac{n - 1}{n + 1} \right)^2 \times 100\%$$

n is the refractive index of the lens material.

The table in **Figure 2** shows the reflectance and properties of lenses frequently used in practice.

The amount of light lost by reflections is clearly unacceptable for any lens material. Incredibly, only mid and high-index lenses automatically benefit from thin film technology treatments, in the form of 'anti-reflection coatings'.

Anti-reflection coatings

The discovery of anti-reflection coatings dates from 1886² when Lord Rayleigh observed the properties of tarnished pieces of glass.

Anti-reflection coatings can also be found in nature on the surface of moth's eyes. Moths benefit from a natural nano-structured film on their eye surface, allowing the moth not to be seen in the dark. Reflections would otherwise give away its location to predators³.

Single layer coatings were invented in October 1935 by Alexander Smakula⁴, who was working for the Carl Zeiss Optics Company. Anti-reflection coatings were a German military secret until the early stages of World War II.

The theory behind anti-reflection coatings uses the principles of interference, as shown in **Figure 3**.

Light travelling in the form of a wave is incident upon a surface; it is reflected back in-phase, resulting in a high-amplitude bright reflection.

To avoid this, a single layer anti-reflection coating is applied to the surface. The reflected wave becomes out-of-phase, with zero amplitude. Consequently no reflection occurs and light is transmitted through to the next surface.

In theory, a single layer anti-reflection coating should have the following properties:

- The layer thickness should be a quarter of the wavelength of light incident on the lens surface
- The layer refractive index should be the square root of the base lens material

This would suffice to produce zero reflectance for a specific wavelength and decreased reflectance for a broad band around this specific wavelength.

Unfortunately the performance of a single layer coating is poor as it only produces satisfactory results with a limited range of wavelengths and incident angles.

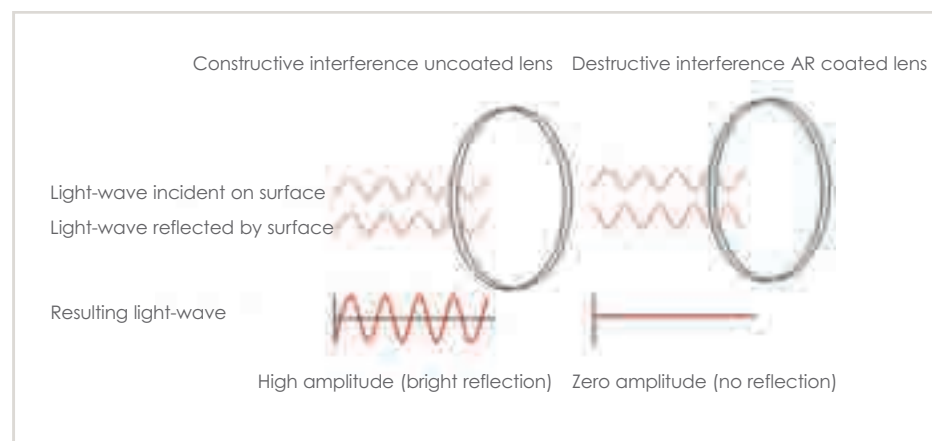
Finding the suitable coating material can often prove difficult. For example, a glass lens of refractive index $n=1.5$ would require a coating of refractive index $n=1.23$, which does not exist. Magnesium fluoride is often used, since it is hard-wearing and can be easily applied to substrates using physical vapour deposition, even though its index is higher than desirable ($n=1.38$).

As a result the optimum performance of a single layer is already compromised by its refractive index relationship with the base lens.

Furthermore, colour effects can appear at oblique angles and different wavelengths. Patients often report a blue-green reflection when

Continued overleaf

Figure 3



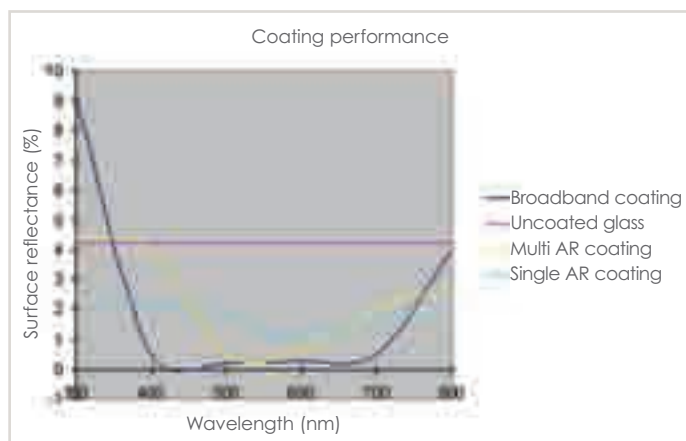


Figure 4

observing a bright light through the lens, held at an oblique angle.

Single layer coatings are problematic. Patients can be dissatisfied with how easily the coating seems to scratch or craze, even if the lenses are cared for properly. Having a negative impression of the product causes patients to avoid it in the future.

Multi anti-reflection and broadband coatings

Multi anti-reflection coatings ('MAR', 'HMAR' with a top hard coat) were designed to tackle these issues, and consist of alternating layers of low-index materials (such as silica) and high index materials.

Broadband coatings are MAR coatings with several layers applied to each side of the lens; they reduce reflections over a wider band of wavelengths of incident light.

Broadband coatings applied to the back surface of the lens are important in creating prescription sunglasses. The coating brings more light into the eye, increasing the contrast of the sun wear as well as making the most of the tint.

Applying a traditional anti-reflective coating to the front of a tinted lens can alter the intensity and hue of the tint, which may not be a good idea!

Figure 4 shows the surface reflectance of anti-reflection coatings against incident light wavelength.

MAR and broadband coatings are usually deposited in vacuum as part as a multi-layered bonded coating.

Figure 5^s

Figure 5 shows the composition of Seiko's SuperClean coating.

Clean coat

Research shows that some patients reject coated lenses, due to

- the smudging of the lens,
- finger-prints, grease showing on the lens,
- fogging/steaming of the lens,
- and therefore having to clean the lens more frequently

Manufacturers responded by producing a 'clean coat'. A clean coat is thought to increase wearer satisfaction, due to its hydrophobic (water repellent) and oleophobic (oil repellent) properties. As a result, the lens requires less frequent cleaning and tends to have reduced misting properties.

Figure 6 lists some of the latest broadband coatings with a clean coat, available today in the UK ophthalmic lens market.

Pentax demonstrates the benefits of a clean coat in daily life, using its KeepClear coating in **Figure 7**.

Another example of a clean coat is the Norville Clarity HP, which structure is shown in **Figure 8**.

Norville⁷ explains the clean coat repels moisture by increasing the steepness of the contact angle, which in turn creates a smaller slide angle to disperse the water droplets (**Figure 9**). The clean coat also provides increased resistance to dirt, oil, watermarks and other environmental influences.

The K coat

The latest development in nano-film technology has been applied to broadband coatings to give anti-static properties, in the form of the Norville Clarity K Coat.

This technology⁸ has been developed by Satisloh and is referred to as Ioncote Kappa. Kappa allows anti-static and anti-radiation (for low energy electromagnetic fields) broadband coatings.

Norville⁸ claims the new optical properties guarantee higher performance in the colour repeatability and lower colour difference between the centre and border of lenses.

This means that the lens is less likely to attract dust, thus reducing further the possibility of scratching and frequent cleaning.

A reflection-free future?

Dispensing opticians and optometrists alike sometimes refer to anti-reflection coatings as reflection-free coatings. This term is a misnomer: at present coatings cannot eliminate 100% of the reflections. Some patients will show you the green reflex of their new lenses, expecting them to be reflection-free.

A recent optical coating⁹ engineered by researchers at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy (United States) exhibited virtually no reflection. It is composed of silicone dioxide (SiO₂) and is deposited at an oblique angle on a titanium nitride substrate. This coating has a refractive index of

$n=1.05$, which is the lowest so far reported.

As this coating closely matches the refractive index of air ($n=1$), surface reflections are virtually eliminated over a wide band of incident wavelengths.

This process has not yet been applied to ophthalmic lenses, but maybe one day we will dispense 'reflection-free' coatings.

Summary

- Anti-reflection coating benefits include increased contrast and visual acuities, and reduced asthenopia.
- The quality of anti-reflection free coatings has improved and coating breakdowns are mostly a thing of the past.
- Providing an up-to-date broadband coating on spectacle lenses increases satisfaction for both full and part-time wearers.
- Modern broadband coatings have a top clean coat, usually water and oil repellent.
- Coatings with a K coat have additional anti-static properties, which further enhances spectacle wear.
- Knowing the properties of modern coatings, turning lens features into patient benefits, alongside optometrist recommendations, help increase sales.

Author's note

The intent of this article is not to recommend any particular lens coating or manufacturer, but to highlight recent product developments. Dispensing opticians are therefore encouraged to consult manufacturers' data to assist in product and supplier selection.

Brand	Coating
Essilor	Crizal Alize with scotchguard
Hoya	Super Hi Vision
Kodak	Clean 'N' CLeAR
Norville	Clarity HP
Pentax	KeepClear
Seiko	SuperClean
Sola	Teflon Easycare

Figure 6

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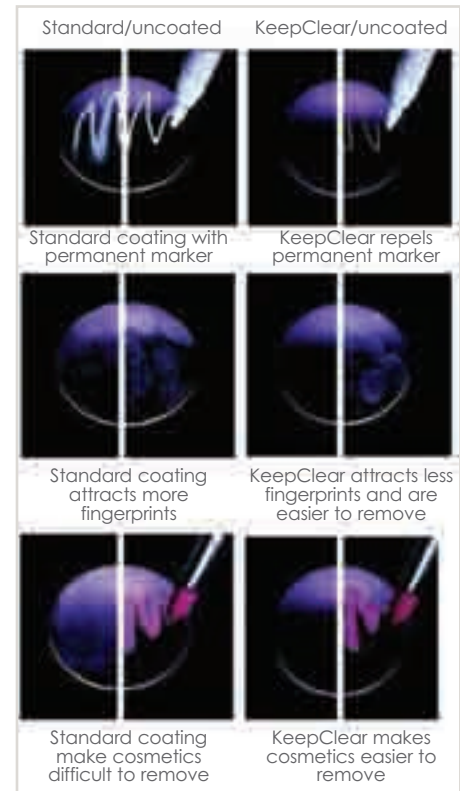


Figure 7⁶

7. Norville (2007) *Technical Sheet Clarity HP Easyclean* available from The Norville Group Ltd
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9. RPI (2007) *Nature Photonics*. Issue: March 2007. Nature Publishing Group: New York

Charles Marguet works as a dispensing optician in a large optical practice in Swansea, South Wales. He leads the training team in-store and is currently studying towards his contact lens certificate. ■

MCQs overleaf

Figure 8⁷

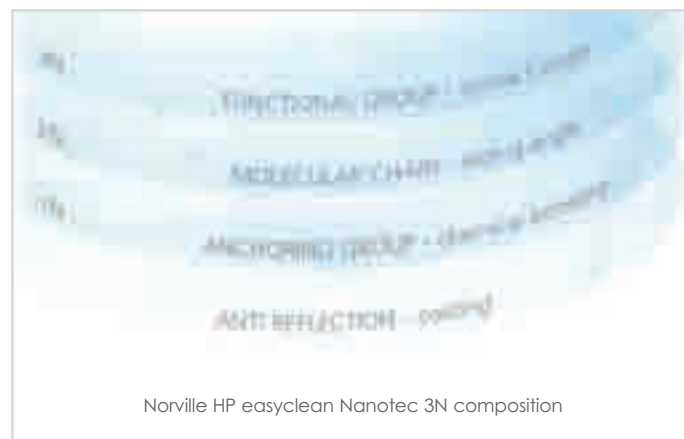
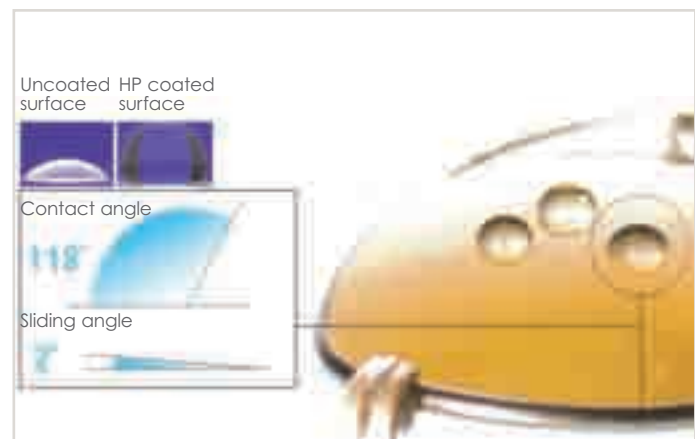


Figure 9



Multiple choice questions (MCQs): Shedding light on reflections

- 1. Which one of the following statements is incorrect?**
- The theory of interference assumes light travels as a wave
 - Light waves are reflected by an uncoated surface according to constructive interference
 - The light waves reflected from a coated surface are in-phase
 - Anti-reflection coatings are based on destructive interference
- 2. In theory, the ideal thickness of a single layer anti-reflection coating for incident light of wavelength 600nm would be:**
- 150nm
 - 300nm
 - 350nm
 - 150mm
- 3. In theory, the ideal refractive index of a single layer anti-reflection coating for a lens of refractive index $n=1.523$ would be:**
- $n=1.123$
 - $n=1.523$
 - $n=1.325$
 - $n=1.234$
- 4. What is the reflectance of the front surface of an uncoated mid index $n=1.54$ lens?**
- 1.54%
 - 4.52%
 - 4.33%
 - 1.24%
- 5. Which one of the following is not a characteristic of a hydrophobic coating?**
- reduced contact angle
 - reduced sliding angle
 - resistant to watermarks
 - reduced misting
- 6. Which one of these is the latest development in thin-film technology, as applied to anti-reflection coatings?**
- Ion Kappa anti-static coatings
 - Reflection free coatings
 - Broadband coatings
 - Clean coats

The deadline for posted or faxed response is 13 February 2009 to the address on page 4.

The module code is C-9324

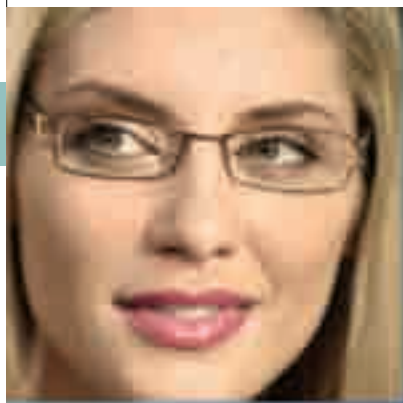
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Answers: Why low vision? Part 2

- 1. What magnification can be achieved for a $-8.00D$ myope reading unaided at 12.5cm?**
- 8x
 - 2x
 - 3x
 - None
- b is correct.** An uncorrected $-8.00D$ myope has the equivalent of a $+8.00D$ add, and as $M=F/4$, $8/4 = 2x$.
- 2. If a $+3.00D$ hyperope uses a spectacle magnifier without spectacles and needs 2.5x magnification, what power spectacle magnifier is required?**
- +2.5D
 - +7.5D
 - +13D
 - +10.75D
- c is correct.** $M=F/4$, so $2.5=F/4$, and $F=+10.00D$. To incorporate the Rx into the spectacle magnifier for a $+3.00D$ hyperope, add $+3.00D$, total power is $+13.00D$.
- 3. Which of these is the darkest filter?**
- 12% absorption
 - 2% LTF
 - 40% LTF
 - 10% absorption
- b is correct.** Only 2% of light is transmitted.
- 4. Which power binoculars would be given to increase the acuity from 6/60 to 6/12?**
- 5x
 - 12x
 - 6x
 - 2x
- a is correct.** To improve the acuity from 6/60 to 6/12, divide 60 by $12 = 5$.
- 5. Which one of these statements is untrue?**
- The larger the magnifier, the weaker the power
 - The higher the magnification, the faster the reading speed
 - The closer the light, the brighter the image
 - A pocket magnifier is useful for shopping
- b is correct.** As the magnification and image size increase, the field of view reduces, so fewer letters will be seen.
- 6. Which one of these statements is true?**
- A binocular reading loupe is useful for watching TV
 - A $-8.00D$ myope can read at 8cm without spectacles
 - 24 round seg bifocals usually work well with macular degeneration
 - Magnification without spectacles can produce an out of focus retinal image
- d is correct.** Magnification will only enlarge the retinal image, not correct the ametropia.

The answers to 'Prism thinning progressive lenses' will appear in our February 2009 issue



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LENS INDOORS"*

ELEANOR EDWARDS,
BROMPTONS
OPTICIANS:

*"I CAN'T ACTUALLY
EVER SEE ME
NOT WEARING
TRANSITIONS
LENSES"*



FINN CARRON,
EYE TECH OPTICIANS:

*"FOLLOWING MY
TRIAL, I WOULD
DEFINITELY
RECOMMEND
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What better place to mark the end of one era and the beginning of the next than within the awe-inspiring vaults and pillars of Canterbury Cathedral? Report: Ann Johnson.
Photographs: Ede and Ravenscroft, Nigel Hawks and Jeff Smorley

Dreams and aspirations

For the 200 graduands taking part in the ABDO Graduation and Prizegiving Ceremony on 26 November, Canterbury Cathedral made a stirring location from which to embark on their chosen careers and to realise, as President Barry Duncan described, their dreams and aspirations.

Welcome from the President

This year's graduation ceremony was a particularly significant occasion for new ABDO President Barry Duncan. In his speech Barry described his sadness at not being able to attend his own graduation. His daughter had just been born and money was in short supply for a newly qualified DO. But Barry made up for this at last year's ceremony by robing up and standing in line alongside the other graduates to have his photograph taken – eight years after qualifying! Barry said, "There is no doubt that I regret not making more of an effort to attend. However, I take great pleasure in attending now and seeing others enjoy themselves."

After welcoming everyone to Canterbury Cathedral on behalf of the ABDO Board, Barry went on to stress the unique worth and meaning of the

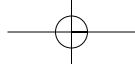
event for all those in attendance. He said, "We are here this evening to celebrate the successes of each and every one of our graduates. This is a very special occasion for them - and for their families and friends. It is an opportunity to reflect on their dedication and commitment over such a long period of time. It marks the end of their studying for the present and a new chapter in their lives."

Barry went on to explain that becoming Vice President and then President of the Association had enhanced his understanding of what graduation was all about. He said, "It is my belief that it is about realising your dreams and aspirations; it is about having ambition; it is about valuing what you have achieved in life, regardless of your age and previous

Continued overleaf

Graduands enjoy the Celebration Reception held in the International Study Centre before the Graduation Ceremony





Graduands waiting with anticipation

experiences, and it is about allowing your friends and family to be immensely proud.

"As graduates, the time has come to put everything you have learned during your studies into practice and to express your skills in the most professional way possible. You will face difficult times along the way but you will learn from these experiences and continue to develop. Above all, the most important thing is that you enjoy being what you have become and take satisfaction from what you have achieved."

The procession

After the entrance of the graduands,

accompanied by Marshall Ros Kirk FBDO, ABDO President from 1989-1992, it was the turn of the procession: Barry Duncan FBDO, ABDO President; Jennifer Brower FBDO (Hons) LVA Cert Ed, ABDO Vice-President; John Fried FBDO, Master of The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers; Alicia Thompson FBDO (Hons) SLD SMC(Tech), ABDO Director of Examinations; Siew Kok Ang, Malaysian Association of Practising Opticians; Sir Anthony Garrett CBE, ABDO General Secretary; Dorothy Watts, Honorary presenter of the Ted Watts Memorial Prize; Nicholas Hornsby BSc (Hons) FBDO, Essilor Ltd; Barry Dibble, Rodenstock (UK) Ltd; Jayne Schofield FBDO (Hons) CL FBCLA, CIBA Vision UK



The Graduands gather in the Chapter House



Ros Kirk leads the graduands to the Cathedral through the Cloisters



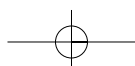
The walk through the Cloisters continues

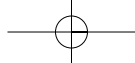


Ros Kirk leads the graduands into the Cathedral



The graduands arriving in the Cathedral





ABDO Graduation and Prizegiving Ceremony

Ltd; Simon Rodwell BA, Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers; Keith Cavaye FBDO (Hons) CL FBCLA, British Contact Lens Association; Richard Hensley FADO (Hons) CL FFDO FBCLA FRSH MInstP MRI, ABDO Principal Examiner in Contact Lens Practice; David Hewlett BA (Hons), Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians; Robert Hughes Hon DSc, Association of Optometrists; Jo Underwood MSc FBDO (Hons) CL (Hons) SLD PGCE, ABDO College; Andrew Cripps FBDO (Hons), Anglia Ruskin University; Julie Lees FBDO, Bradford College; Trevor Hunter FBDO (Hons) CL, City & Islington College; and, Mark Chandler, ABDO Head of Examinations and Registration.

Mark Chandler then introduced the members of the procession. This was followed by the Address from the Master of The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers, John Fried FBDO and the Address by ABDO President, Barry Duncan FBDO.

The Head of Examinations and Registration then called the names of graduands present who went forward to the President in turn and their award was conferred by handshake.

The awards

The ABDO Preliminary Qualification Examination Prize, awarded for the best mark in the combined PQE Examinations to Michael Norman,

presented by Barry Duncan FBDO.

The Stepper Award, awarded for the best mark in the Preliminary Qualifying Practical Examination to Philip Wilson, presented by Barry Duncan FBDO.

The Essilor Prize, awarded for the best mark with credit in the combined Final Theory & Practical Examinations to Sandra Charlesworth, presented by Nicholas Hornsby BSc (Hons) FBDO.

The J W Grieve Prize, awarded for the best mark in section 2 of the Final Practical Examination to Emma Haycock, presented by Barry Duncan FBDO.

Continued overleaf



Mark Chandler calls the names of graduands to come forward to receive their awards from the President, Barry Duncan



The ABDO Preliminary Qualification Examination Prize presented by Barry Duncan to Michael Norman



The Stepper Award presented by Barry Duncan to Philip Wilson



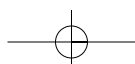
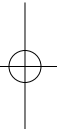
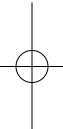
The Essilor Prize presented by Nicholas Hornsby to Sandra Charlesworth



The J W Grieve Prize presented by Barry Duncan to Emma Haycock



The Tony Griffiths Prize for Excellence presented by Jennifer Brower to Emma Fedrick





The Carl Zeiss Prize presented by Barry Duncan FBDO to Lisa Don



The Rodenstock Prize presented by Barry Dibble to Andrew Caswell



The Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians Prize presented by David Hewlett to Kim Lilley

Officially joining the optical family

John Fried FBDO, Master of The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers, gave strong words of encouragement to graduates saying, "Today is the reward for all your hard work in studying for your diplomas. Your diploma is a valuable asset that will stand you in good stead for your future career. You are now officially joining the optical family, ready to embark on a lifetime of assisting the visually impaired."

After providing a historical background to the Company and outlining its present role, John described to everyone how membership of the Spectacle Makers' Company included ophthalmologists, optometrists, orthoptists and frame and lens manufacturers, as well as dispensing opticians. He then explained that, in addition to offering an insight into the many years of history backing up the diplomas being received, he wanted to urge graduates to join the Spectacle Makers Company.

John said, "You have the right to join as members of ABDO and I would encourage all of you to join. Take part in the Company's activities in any way

you can or prefer. Perhaps it will be as a tutor or examiner in the future, or to enjoy the many social events. We are called the Fellowship of the Spectacle Makers of London – fellowship being the key word. People are drawn from all of the optical family – to meet, discuss and compare. But above all, we share a common commitment to improve the quality of life of the visually impaired.

"This is our chosen profession – the gift of sight is a precious one. In welcoming you all again to the optical family I wish you all well for the future and hope you fulfil your ambitions in your future careers." ■



John Fried Master of The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers delivers his speech to the audience in Canterbury Cathedral

The Tony Griffiths Prize for Excellence, awarded for the best mark in section 3 of the Final Practical Examination to Emma Fedrick, presented by Jennifer Brower FBDO (Hons) LVA Cert Ed.

The Carl Zeiss Prize, awarded to the best correspondence course student to Lisa Don, presented by Barry Duncan FBDO.

The Rodenstock Prize, awarded for the best mark in Section 4 of the Final Practical Examination to Andrew Caswell, presented by Barry Dibble.

The Federation of Ophthalmic and Dispensing Opticians Prize, awarded to the best Day Release Course student to Kim Lilley, presented by David Hewlett BA (Hons).

The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers' Prize, awarded for the best mark in the Final Practical Examination to Mark Tuffin, presented by John Fried FBDO.

The Association of Optometrists Prize, awarded for the best mark in Section 1 of the Final Practical Examination to David Lipson and James Stone, presented by Robert Hughes Hon DSc.

The Association of British Dispensing Opticians Final Examination Prize, awarded for the best mark in the combined Final Examinations to Sandra Charlesworth, presented by Siew Kok Ang.



The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers' Prize presented by John Fried to Mark Tuffin



The Association of Optometrists Prize awarded to David Lipson and James Stone, presented by Robert Hughes and collected by Jo Underwood



The Association of British Dispensing Opticians Final Examination Prize presented by Siew Kok Ang to Sandra Charlesworth



The Association of British Dispensing Opticians Final Overseas Examination Prize presented by Barry Duncan to Ng Piu Min

The Association of British Dispensing Opticians Final Overseas Examination Prize, awarded for the best mark in the combined overseas Final Examinations to Ng Piu Min, presented by Barry Duncan FBDO.

The British Contact Lens Association Prize, awarded for the best mark in the aftercare section of the Practical Examination, Certificate in Contact Lens Practice to James Burton, presented by Keith Cavaye FBDO (Hons) CL FBCLA.

The Elsevier Prize, awarded for the highest full pass in the combined Theory and Practical Examinations, Certificate in Contact Lens Practice to Nicholas Sage,



The British Contact Lens Association Prize presented by Keith Cavaye to James Burton

presented by Barry Duncan FBDO.
The Hensley Prize, awarded for the highest first attempt mark in the Contact Lens Practice Theory Examination to Christopher Earll, presented by Richard Hensley FADO (Hons) CL FFDO FRSH FBCLA MInstP MRI.

The CIBA Vision Prize for Excellence, awarded for the best mark in the Practical Examinations, Certificate in Contact Lens Practice to Nicholas Sage, presented by Jayne Schofield FBDO (Hons) CL FBCLA.

The Johnson & Johnson Vision Care Excellence Award, awarded for the highest aggregate mark in the Theory Examinations, Certificate in Contact



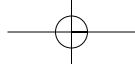
The Elsevier Prize presented by Barry Duncan to Nicholas Sage

Lens Practice to Dawn Pippard, presented by Barry Duncan FBDO.

The Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers Prize, awarded for the best mark in Section B of the Practical Examination, Certificate in Contact Lens Practice to Darshna Bharadwa, presented by Simon Rodwell BA.

The Ted Watts Memorial Prize, awarded for the best mark in the LVA Examinations to David Holmes, presented by Dorothy Watts.

The T A Doyle Memorial Prize, awarded for the best mark in an Honours paper to Mitchel Reuben, presented by Alicia Thompson FBDO (Hons) SLD SMC(Tech). **Continued overleaf**



The Hensley Prize presented by Richard Hensley to Christopher Earl



The CIBA Vision Prize presented by Jayne Schofield to Nicholas Sage



The Johnson & Johnson Vision Care Excellence Award presented by Barry Duncan to Dawn Pippard



The Association of Contact Lens Manufacturers Prize presented by Simon Rodwell to Darshna Bharadwa



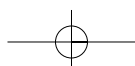
The Ted Watts Memorial Prize presented by Dorothy Watts to David Holmes



The T A Doyle Memorial Prize presented by Alicia Thompson to Mitchel Reuben



After the ceremony the graduates and members of the procession gather together





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Most commercial leases contain a mechanism for the rent to be reviewed at regular intervals, usually three or five years, and tenants could be hit with a request by a landlord for a significant increase. A rent review can, however, be used as an opportunity to renegotiate with the landlord - particularly in a falling property market.

Philippa Aldrich explains

Managing a rent review

Tenants receiving a landlord's rental proposals should not panic but nor should they delay. It is essential to first work out the nature of the rent review and, if necessary, seek expert advice.

What type of rent review?

First, tenants should have a look at their lease to identify the type of rent review being invoked. Some leases include clauses that provide for set increases in rent. The lease might, for example, provide that the annual rent will increase after three years. It is unlikely in this case, that the tenant will be able to oppose an increase in year three as he has effectively agreed to it in advance.

Alternatively, the lease may contain an 'escalation' type of rent review where an index, such as the retail price index, is used as a basis for calculating the rent rise. Again, provided the right index has been used and the maths is correct, there will be little opportunity for the tenant to object.

Other rents, particularly in the retail sector are linked to turnover whereby the landlord will take a set percentage of the income. The parties might also agree a sliding scale of percentages, for example, charging a different percentage for the first year of the

lease, to reflect the time the tenant spends getting the business up and running. Again, it is worth checking the landlord's calculations.

The most common type of rent review, however, is to increase the rent to the open market rent for the property at the date of the review. While this sounds straightforward, in practice, the drafting and operation of this type of rent review can be very complicated.

The lease will usually direct the parties to agree the market rent of the property on the basis of a 'hypothetical' lease which includes certain 'assumptions' and 'disregards'. These are intended to ensure fairness between the parties. The exact wording of this particular provision is important.

A major problem for tenants is a 'headline rent' clause. A headline rent is the rent that is paid under a lease, after the end of any rent-free periods or any period of reduced rent. It creates an artificially inflated rent by ignoring the rent-free period, period of reduced rent or any other concessions the landlord may have given to the tenant in return for a higher headline rate.

Rent review clauses should not be

read in isolation. Other clauses in the lease can also be relevant. It is fairly common to see lease clauses to the effect that the premises are to be used only for a specified purpose. However, tenants should note that if the landlord consents to a wider use or a different one, this may affect the rent review.

Upwards Only Rent Reviews (UORR)
Open market rent reviews are upwards only. This means that the rent can stay the same or be increased but it cannot go down. UORRs are a major source of controversy in today's property market. In a falling market, a tenant may end up paying rent that no longer reflects the market value of the property and, depending on the date of the rent review, be paying the higher rent for a number of years.

Rent review procedure

Having established what sort of rent review is being implemented, the next step is to work out what procedure needs to be followed.

Some leases have long, detailed requirements, such as obligations to serve notices triggering the review and counter-notices in response from the other party. Both sorts of notice may be subject to strict time limits. The content, or even the precise form, of

notices may be prescribed in the lease. Complicated procedures such as these can be problematical. The worst case scenario is a tenant who fails to deliver a counter-notice in the right way may lose their right to challenge the revised rent proposed by the landlord, however high. Sometimes a landlord failing properly to serve a trigger notice may lose their right to review the rent.

Disputes

What happens if the landlord and tenant cannot agree? The rent review provisions will normally state that, if no agreement is reached, the parties may refer the dispute to a third party for resolution. This third party is usually a surveyor and is appointed as an 'expert' in property and possibly in local property in particular. An arbitrator is bound by the Arbitration Act and is more like a judge.

In each case 'comparable' rent

reviews of similar properties will be considered in order to ascertain market value. Rent reviews are, therefore, essentially backward looking which means that where rents are likely to fall in the future, landlords will be keen to expedite the agreement of rent reviews so they can use as comparables rents agreed before the rental market began to dip. Equally, it may pay tenants to wait.

Once the new rent has been agreed, it will generally be backdated to the date of the review and the tenant will need to pay the landlord the arrears, together with interest.

Opportunities?

Rent reviews can, however, be used as opportunities to renegotiate with the landlord - particularly where the tenant has the benefit of a right to break the lease. In a falling property market where the landlord is keen to keep the tenant, the threat to break

the lease might persuade the landlord to agree a lower rent.

If there is no break clause but the proposed rent will make continuing with the business difficult, a landlord may be prepared to negotiate to avoid being left with an empty building.

However, landlords are always concerned with headline rates - they can use these as comparables to agree rent reviews on other of their properties and they are also key measures for valuing the property for investment purposes. Sometimes landlords, while insisting on a full market rent, may give the tenant other concessions - such as a rent holiday.

Philippa Aldrich is a qualified solicitor and is a partner in the real estate group of Shadbolt LLP ■

The optometrist's practitioner-patient manual

by Anthony J Phillips, published by Butterworth Heinemann/Elsevier, ISBN 978-0-7506-7539-0

Don't be put off by the title! This book is excellent for *all* practice staff. This is a *must have* for dispensing opticians, optical assistants, and those completing NVQ and SMC level 2 and 3 courses.

It's handy for professional employees to use - both with patients and during staff training sessions. It contains back-to-basics, concise terms and all of the photographs and diagrams are in colour.

The manual is easy to use with five separate sections: The eye; spectacle lenses; abnormal conditions; contact lenses; and, binocular vision. The pages are laminated so they are clear and glossy, and will stand the test of time.

Professional staff can use the manual to demonstrate to patients basic eye conditions such as astigmatism, phorias and cataracts and more complicated conditions such as AMD, corneal ulcers and punctual plugs. There is an excellent section demonstrating Ortho-K, contact lens

insertion and removal for both soft and rigid lens types and lens deposits.

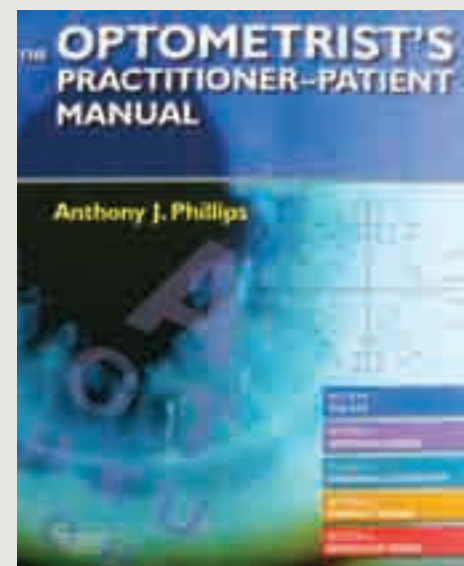
Dispensing staff can use the manual to demonstrate progressive lens designs, polarised filters and the benefits of MAR coatings. One of the great features of this publication is that it doesn't include lens manufacturer's trade names; therefore it can be used in any practice or clinic.

It can be used as a training tool for new employees and as a refresher or 'top up' for in-house training.

I have shown this manual to first year trainees, pre-reg dispensing opticians and optical assistants - all of them agree that it's fabulous!

It's rather like *Hello* magazine - every picture tells a story, and you can talk around the illustrations.

Reviewed by Sally Bates FBDO who is responsible for lecturing the practical dispensing subjects at the ABDO College. Sally is the proprietor of Identity Optical Training. ■



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This book, plus numerous other titles, can be purchased from the ABDO College Bookshop at www.abdo.org.uk or by contacting Justin Hall on 01227 733904, email jhall@abdo.org.uk

On Wednesday 19 November, Barry Duncan welcomed Area representatives to the President's Consultative meeting, his first as ABDO President

President's consultative meeting

The General Secretary began his report with the formation of the LOC Support Unit (LOCSU) by ABDO, AOP and FODO, which, in his view, represented significant progress in collaboration between the optical bodies. Tony Garrett explained that, with the advent of the new GOS contract and the potential for Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) to commission additional and enhanced services, the aim of the LOCSU was to support local negotiations and encourage consistency of activity. The LOCSU would present its first annual report at the forthcoming NOC. Seventy five per cent of LOCs had already subscribed to the LOCSU and it was important to persuade the others of the benefits of membership in the interests of the profession as a whole.

Regarding collaborative working between the optical bodies and the merger of a number of AOP and FODO committees, the meeting was informed that the other optical bodies had been invited to take part, either as observers or as participating members. ABDO had decided on the latter and was now represented on three of the joint committees. This development represented a serious attempt to unify the profession and ensure a collective voice when dealing with external agencies such as

PCTs and the Department of Health (DH). The Board would be deciding on the extent of its commitment to the process and he would report back to the next President's Consultative meeting.

The foundation degree course commenced at ABDO College in September and validation was now being sought from Canterbury Christ Church University for the BSc Hons course, which would be available in two years' time. Once validation had been received, it was hoped to offer education packages to members wishing to upgrade existing qualifications. The number of places available on the foundation course were 120 and 126 students had signed up, representing a highly successful achievement by ABDO for its members.

Regarding current progress in plans to reintroduce the dispensing training programme in Singapore, the first round of ABDO examinations would take place in Singapore in December 2008 and it was hoped to enter into partnership with a polytechnic in Singapore. It was pointed out that overseas examinations provided a valuable external source of income, underpinning ABDO's growth and activity without putting an additional

financial burden on UK members. For this reason, the Association was looking at other countries in Asia where there might be a market for its examination and qualification.

Reporting on ABDO's membership of the Joint Optical Committee of the European Union (JOCEU) which represented the UK optical bodies' views at the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO), it was noted that a European Diploma of Optometry had been developed some years ago, to which the GOC had granted partial recognition. ABDO had been arguing additionally for a European Diploma in Optics which may now come to fruition. In this event, ABDO would bid to run the Diploma, not only to generate additional income but also to use it as a vehicle to achieve ABDO's political aspirations to expand the scope of the qualification beyond that of the current ABDO diploma.

The meeting was updated on the current situation regarding increased regulation of the profession. As a consequence, the GOC had been obliged to change its structure and the way in which it worked, with increased responsibilities and a corresponding need to increase the registration fees by a substantial



Area representatives are welcomed by Barry Duncan to his first President's Consultative Day

amount. The point had been made to the GOC that it should allow registrants some flexibility in payment arrangements. This would be essential to ensure members were not struck off the register because they were unable to pay the fees.

The General Secretary expressed concern at the continuing regulatory activity by the Department of Health. The optical bodies had made joint representations to the DoH, but there was little evidence that it was receptive to their views. It was noted that ABDO, in conjunction with AOP and FODO, employed full time lobbyists who maintained contacts with MPs, House of Commons committees and relevant members of the House of Lords.

In reply to a query, it was confirmed that ABDO members could withdraw from GOC registration at any time. However, this would have a serious impact on practice owners and would prohibit contact lens opticians from practising. Tony Garrett pointed out that members who worked for the major corporate companies would wish to be registered, since non-registration could result in them being paid as dispensing assistants.

Comment was made that one LOC had decided not to subscribe to the LOCSU as it was negotiating enhanced services with the local PCT and needed to fund its own activities from the statutory levy. It was pointed out that the LOCSU would help LOCs to negotiate an appropriate fee, which was not always the outcome when LOCs negotiated

independently. Recent developments in Scotland and Wales were cited as good examples of successful negotiations.

In answer to a query on the European situation, the General Secretary confirmed that the proposed European Diploma in Optics would be a completely new qualification, not an adjustment to the existing one. ECOO would decide on the competencies to be examined, ABDO would submit a bid to run the examinations and would press for a qualification that would enable members to extend their scope of practice. In addition, the introduction of a European qualification would remove some of the obstacles currently put in the way of members who might wish to practise in another country within the EU.

The President mentioned Optometry Wales, Optometry Scotland and Optometry Northern Ireland, on all of which ABDO was represented. He noted that three of the largest Health Boards in Scotland wanted the Scottish Executive to introduce listing for dispensing opticians and that Optometry Scotland had negotiated a £1 million training grant which would include dispensing opticians. There was optimism about progress in Northern Ireland and real opportunities in Wales. The President pointed out that none of these activities would be acceptable to Government or the NHS if dispensing opticians were not registered.

ABDO Conference 2008

Elaine Grisdale, head of professional services, gave an update on the



Meeting others from around the country (l-r): Jo Holmes Area 7, Lee Price Area 6, Jim Gordon Area 7, and Huntly Taylor Area 9

Manchester conference held in September and outlined the events that had taken place. She noted that the majority of delegates were in independent practice and that their average age was lower than in previous years. There was a general consensus that the conference in its new format had been a great success. Sponsors had been very supportive and there was a waiting list for next year's conference in Brighton, with many companies having already signed statements of intent to exhibit. Area representatives were urged to encourage their colleagues to attend the conference and flyers would be available for Area meetings.

Membership survey

Marketing manager Michael Potter updated the meeting with an overview of the results of the membership survey carried out in June 2008, building on initial results that had already been presented at the AGM and published in *Dispensing Optics*. Almost half of respondents had commented positively on the structure of existing Areas. Of those who commented negatively, the main concern was that Areas were too large and meetings too far away and difficult to attend. As a result of this response, Michael reported that the Board had established a working group to review the Area structure and the President had introduced an initiative whereby two Board members would attend each Area meeting. Areas were asked to let ABDO know the dates of their meetings.

The results had demonstrated that members were aware that ABDO

Continued overleaf

provided CET, *Dispensing Optics*, Area meetings, an annual conference and exhibition, professional indemnity insurance, product sales, Hons courses and telephone help-lines. CET was considered to be the most important benefit, followed by professional indemnity insurance, the help-lines and the journal. Results indicated that financial products were less important. In response, the Association would continue to review its current range of services and to improve the way it communicated those services to members.

It was noted that eight in ten respondents considered ABDO communications to be at the right level, with nearly nine in ten believing them to be relevant. Six in ten expressed a preference for paper communications, with four in ten preferring email communications. Responses had demonstrated that the website and telephone were less popular methods of communication. Respondents visited the website an average of ten times a year. A regular email newsletter would be introduced during 2009 in acknowledgement of the trend towards increased electronic communication and as a more immediate means of imparting information.

Survey results suggested that nine in ten respondents read every issue of *Dispensing Optics*, and that the journal was shared with practice staff. Eighty seven per cent of respondents felt the journal was relevant to their work, with 81 per cent indicating it was up-to-date. Three in four felt the journal achieved the right balance between editorial and advertising content.

Membership

The head of membership reported on the serious problems with the membership database that had arisen over the last few months. Katie Docker apologised to Area officers for the consequent delays in sending out Area information and for errors in some of the renewal notices. As a result of these problems, plans for the locum register and student on-line membership applications had been delayed until 2009.

The President acknowledged the

seriousness of the problems that had arisen with the database and thanked the membership team for their work and dedication in resolving them.

The recruitment area on the website was welcomed but comment was made that it was difficult to find specific jobs as so many vacancies remained on the list. Katie said she would review this area.

Finance

Chief finance officer T Pavanakumar reminded Areas of discussions at the previous meeting relating to a proposal to hold Area funds centrally within ABDO's accounts, in a separate section for each Area. He indicated that most Areas had responded favourably and that the arrangements would be in place from 1 December 2008. The new arrangements would relieve Area officers from some of their current responsibilities and would enable ABDO to claim back VAT on Areas' behalf. In future, CET and other funding would be credited to each Area and Areas would receive quarterly statements of the funds held on their behalf. It was suggested that £1000 would provide a sufficient 'float', with ABDO making larger payments for Areas, either by BACS transfer or by cheque.

Round table discussions

Area representatives split into two groups for informal discussions, one relating to Area structures and attendance, the other relating to current and future dispensing services. Reporting back, the first group suggested ABDO provide more support, perhaps by combining events into larger regional meetings that could be formatted as road shows and presented in different Area locations. The group had also discussed the difficulty in retaining members on Area committees. It was noted that the working group established by the Board would meet shortly and there would be further consultation on these issues.

The second group reported detailed consideration of the desirability and benefits of granting dispensing opticians the right to refract. The group also felt that contact lens opticians should have the right to use

anaesthetic drops without the need for supervision by an optometrist. Discussions had also included the benefits of sending PCTs detailed information about dispensing opticians in their area.

Any other business and questions

Comment was made that Area members frequently asked about the role and activities of the ABDO Board. It was suggested that information be circulated to Areas after each Board meeting. The marketing manager reminded Areas of the intention to send Board representatives to each Area meeting and noted a presentation had been created about ABDO's work, to be given by Board representatives at Area meetings. Whilst the full presentation would take some 20 minutes, it could be tailored to suit each Area's needs and requirements. The General Secretary agreed to consider how to circulate a general report of Board meetings without compromising the need for confidentiality in terms of sensitive and political issues.

It was suggested that a summary of ABDO Committee minutes could be included on the website after each Committee meeting, amended to exclude confidential matters. The marketing manager felt this was the kind of information to be included in the proposed e-newsletter to members.

It was mentioned that responses on an optometry website suggested that dispensing optician support was highly rated when optometrists were choosing jobs.

In response to a question, the President outlined what he hoped to achieve during his two-year term of office. He hoped to promote greater engagement by members and a confidence in their role as dispensing opticians. He wished to promote awareness of ABDO's positive achievements amongst the wider membership. The President welcomed the collaborative working with AOP and FODO but stressed the need for ABDO to retain its own identity.

Next President's Consultative meeting: Wednesday 20 May 2009 (subject to final confirmation). ■



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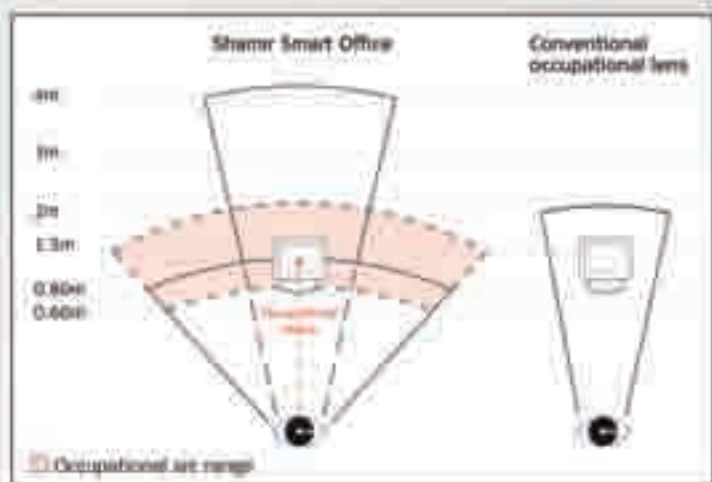
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- Provide frame data: A, B, DBL or tracer file
- Provide the Occupational Arc location details

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The Council of the International Opticians Association (l-r): David Wilson from Australia, Charles Hargrove from the USA, Don Smith from Canada, Paul Clarke from Australia, Paul Hersee from Ireland and David Kirk from the UK, with their copies of the code

The first worldwide code of conduct for dispensing optics

Council of the International Opticians Association achieved quite a coup at the 27th Convention in September when they approved the first worldwide Code of Conduct for the practice of dispensing optics.

All ABDO members are entitled to a copy of the Code and as automatic members of the IOA are encouraged to abide by it.

A report of the Convention, which was held either side of the ABDO Conference and Exhibition in Manchester, will be published in a future issue of *Dispensing Optics*. ■

ABDO Benevolent Fund

If you know of a dispensing optician, or a dependant of a dispensing optician, who might benefit from the ABDO Benevolent Fund, please get in touch with Barbara Doris on 020 7298 5102 or email bdoris@abdolondon.org.uk or write to her at ABDO, 199 Gloucester Terrace, London W2 6LD. ■

Area news-round

Area 3 (North West): Focus on sports vision

Sports Vision is the theme of a CET Sunday training day being organised by Area 3 at the Manchester Velodrome on Sunday 8 March. CET approved presentations will be delivered looking at the implications of the theme for dispensing opticians.

Subjects will include eye injuries resulting from sports activities, specialised spectacle lenses for sports, specialised contact lenses for sports, frames designed for sporting activities and the implications of contact lens solutions and in-eye lubricants in sporting applications.

A mini exhibition will be included and confirmed exhibitors include Rupp & Hubbrach, Alcon Laboratories and Johnson & Johnson Vision Care. A maximum of eight CET points have been applied for and the day will include a buffet lunch. All are welcome including optometrists, dispensing opticians, optometry students and support staff, although priority booking will be given to ABDO members.

Initial cost estimate per delegate is £40 but could be significantly less. Places are limited so early booking is advised. Send a deposit cheque for £10, made out to ABDO Area 3, to: Richard S Morris FBDO, ABDO Area 3 Chairman, 4 Orchard Close, Haymakers Park, Great Sutton, South Wirral CH66 2XW.

Area 5 (Midlands): CET at the Riverside

The team at Area 5 are in the process of finalising the line-up for their forthcoming CET day at the Riverside Centre, Derby, on Monday 2 March. As per previous CET days, delegates will be able to gain around six CET points. The cost is £20 per ABDO member, which includes a full day of presentations, coffee tea and biscuits at each interval, and a hot and cold buffet lunch. For bookings or further information, email Ian Hardwick at ian@ihardwick.orangehome.co.uk, or phone him on 07814 558343. Places are available on a first come, first served basis.

Area 12 (Scotland): Practice pearls to take home

ABDO members north of the border

took home several pearls of wisdom following their recent meeting at McDiarmid Park in Perth. Sponsored by Alcon and International Eyewear, Area 12's November gathering featured talks from Alan Suttie of Fife Society for the Blind on 'Interdisciplinary working to deliver effective low vision care', and from Alcon's Steve Whittaker who discussed 'Solutions . . . why they work and why they don't'.

Area 12 Chairman Brenda Rennie said: "It was a good group size and most members went home with Systane and pens. We also had the chance to look at the new range of frames from International Eyewear. Everyone felt that the speakers delivered excellent and unbiased lectures and gave us all a few points to consider carefully in the day-to-day running of our practices."

Area 12's next meetings will be held on Sunday 18 January at the Marriot Hotel in Glasgow, and on Monday 2 February (TBC). For further details see *Diary of events* or contact Brenda Rennie by email brendarennie@f2s.com ■

Newsbrief



Barry Duncan

ABDO Membership - renewal notice

ABDO members received their renewal notice during the middle of December to renew their membership for 2009. If you have not received your membership reminder notice for any reason please let the Membership office know. You are able to pay your membership subscription for 2009 online at www.abdo.org.uk in the secure members' area.

Please can you also check that we have the correct mailing addresses for you and contact details. Due to our database problems in October our records may not be as accurate as we would like them to be so your help is needed.

Katie Docker, kdocker@abdo.org.uk

GOC retention fee jumps by £50

GOC registrants should by now have received their retention packs with details of the first fees hike in four years. The annual retention fee for 2009/10 will be £219, compared with £169 the previous year.

In announcing its decision, the GOC said members recognised that the new fee amount of £219 represented a significant increase, particularly in the current economic climate. However, whilst the retention fee has remained fixed since 2005/06 the GOC's operating costs have been steadily increasing. This has resulted in a deficit budget in 2008/09, which means the current fee (£169) is no longer sustainable.

The GOC is also now applying late charges to registrants, both full and student, who miss the retention deadlines. Full registrants who fail to return their retention application, payment or both by the 15 March deadline have to pay a £20 administration charge on top of the basic retention fee. If they miss the 31 March deadline they will have to pay £70 in addition to the basic registration fee to be restored to the Register. Students who fail to return their retention application, payment or both by 15 July will have to pay a £10 administration charge on top of the basic retention fee. If they miss the 31 August deadline they will have to pay £40 to be restored to the Register. ■

Points from the President

November has been a very busy month and sadly we had the disturbing news from the GOC regarding fees. Clearly this has caused great concern and as a registrant I feel disturbed that in the current economic climate, this rise has been imposed. Now more than ever, we will increase our efforts to have our members formally recognised and be listed by the Government and seek funding for CET.

I had the opportunity at the Optometry Scotland Conference on 23 November to ask the Deputy Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, about our position and pleasingly she announced that the Scottish Government are aware of the anomalies and will dually work with us to see how we move forward. Additionally, we have been assured that we will be involved in the forthcoming training that will be organised as part of the £1 million budget Optometry Scotland negotiated with the Government therefore our members north of the border will benefit from this. There is no doubt that opportunities may arise with the devolved Governments and as a result we will continue to work closely with our colleagues in

Optometry Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Along with the General Secretary, I attended the National Optometric Conference in Warwickshire. Once again there was a very positive feeling towards dispensing opticians with reference made to us on several occasions in some of the key addresses which was very pleasing. By badging the conference jointly with AOP, LOC Support Unit and FODO, we are getting the publicity we require and there is no doubt that we are receiving full support in our activities by the aforementioned bodies.

The next year will continue to be challenging. However, once again may I reiterate that we are focussed on the job in hand and we will do whatever we can do to make things better for our members. At times we can all become frustrated at the lack of developments, particularly with Governments but we must remain patient and continue to develop as professionals. Let us all hope that changes will occur sooner rather than later.

Barry Duncan
barry@erskiptopticians.co.uk



The new Henson 7000 will be on display by Buchmann at Eyecare 3000



Optisoft video demonstrations are available for all modules



The new Pachmate DGH 55 Pachymeter from Grafton

Optical exhibitors Glasgow-bound

Buchmann UK is just one of the many exhibitors heading north for the 13th Eyecare 3000 event on 18 and 19 January at the Glasgow Marriott Hotel.

The company will be displaying the range of Henson field analysers, including the new Henson 7000, the IOpen hand-held tonometer, Rodenstock instruments and Breifeld and Schliekert consumables and practice products. With an established nationwide

service team Buchmann also provides a full range of Rodenstock Combi units, WECO and Briot edgers.

Also taking to the exhibition floor will be Optisoft, promoting fully integrated clinical imaging. Via Optisoft's OptomNote all visual images captured become an integral part of the patient's notes. Enhancing levels of patient care and stepping up practice efficiency can also be achieved with the appointments, recall,

dispensing, cash and stock control, direct debits and a host of other modules from the new Optisoft Enterprise Edition, which will be available to trial.

This major update sees a more intuitive and user-friendly design, based on the widely used Windows system to run on all modern platforms - XP, Vista and Office 2007.

For more details about Eyecare 3000, visit www.eyecare3000.co.uk ■

Small but perfectly formed

Grafton Optical has added the Pachmate DGH 55 Pachymeter to its extensive product portfolio.

Measuring just 175mm long and weighing a mere 112 grams, the Pachmate DGH 55 is claimed to be one of the world's smallest, lightest hand-held Pachymeters. It can easily fit into a pocket or can be worn around the neck with a lanyard.

Even with its small size and weight, the Pachmate DGH 55 Pachymeter is said to remain extremely accurate, providing reliable corneal thickness measurements to five microns, with a one-micron resolution. It stores up to 25 measurements bilaterally, which can be recalled quickly and simply. The display shows a running average and the standard deviation in microns.

The easy-to-use Pachmate DGH 55 Pachymeter audibly indicates valid measurements and the completion of each measurement group. The replaceable probe is adjustable to aid in correct applanation and can be easily detached for cleaning. It can be permanently configured to meet the user's exact requirements, and comes in a useful carrying case with a battery charger, extra rechargeable batteries, lanyard and a calibration verification device. ■

Helping to build a CLEER-er picture

Dispensing opticians are being encouraged to take part in a Europe-wide web project collecting evidence of 'significant' contact lens-related incidents.

More than 200 practitioners from 22 countries have so far taken part in the CLEER Project (Contact Lens European Evidence Reporting Project), which began last June. The one-year project, coordinated by the European Contact Lens Forum, runs until May 31 and practitioners are being asked for their support.

The project seeks to provide factual data (evidence) about significant incidents in Europe induced by, or related to, contact lenses (including non-corrective or cosmetic lenses). 'Significant' is defined as, "An asymptomatic or

symptomatic clinician-observed slit lamp sign that necessitates one or more of the following: temporary discontinuation of lens wear; treatment; or referral".

The data will be used to support efforts to regulate the supply of contact lenses across Europe. One of the questions is: "Was the sale of the contact lenses under regulated or unregulated conditions?"

ECOO Secretary General, Richard Carswell, said: "ECLF is very pleased with the still increasing momentum of registrations and case reporting. We now have reporters from almost all EU member countries, plus Norway and Switzerland, for bilateral contract reasons, and reports come in on a steady basis."

To complete the survey, visit www.CLEER-project.eu.



Save the date for Brighton

Saturday 3 to Monday 5 October 2009



2009 ABDO Conference and Exhibition

Hilton Brighton Metropole

Please note all optical professionals are invited to attend

ABDO Conference Office (Event Exchange Ltd)

Telephone 01225 869 000

Email rsvp@eventexchange.co.uk

Website www.abdoconference.co.uk

Association of British Dispensing Opticians



One of the new models from Face a Face



A Karen Millen frame from Andrew Actman



New Rodenstock recruits, Kevin Steptoe and Sheldon Tessler

Fashion quarter attracts top names

Some of Europe's leading frame suppliers have signed up to exhibit within Optrafair stylish Fashion Quarter.

Complete with champagne bar, the Fashion Quarter at this year's Birmingham showcase will be the place to spot the latest hot trends.

Michaela Rene, communications manager for Face a Face, said: "With Mido being earlier this year, some of our new designs will not be ready for the Milan show, so we will preview new shapes and concepts at Optrafair." Lisa Mulvey, UK manager for Ebony Eyewear, said: "We are only a small company but Optrafair always generates a lot of leads for us. We find

the fashion area to be very good as people who are looking for our kind of product come here."

Andrew Actman will be exhibiting collections from Oasis, Karen Millen Eyewear and the signature Andrew Actman and Mico Eyewear. "The Fashion Quarter, with its High Street concept, is a natural choice for us, suiting the of-the-moment fashion boutique style of many of our brands," said Andrew Actman.

Other exhibitors include Orange Eyewear, Caseco, William Morris (London), UK Eyeworks and White Vision. For the latest show news visit www.optrafair.co.uk ■

New managers boost sales force

Rodenstock has appointed two new area sales managers. Kevin Steptoe SMC Tech, will cover practices in the North and Scotland from his base in Darlington, while Sheldon Tessler will cover the South West.

Having worked in optics for 15 years, both in lab and practice management, Kevin understands the needs for an efficient and accurate glazing service. His eyewear sales experience with Bushnell UK is particularly beneficial in understanding the highly competitive sunglass market. Said Kevin: "Wimbledon sunglasses are a wonderful practice

builder and I am looking forward to visiting Rodenstock's loyal customers to show them the latest products."

Bringing six years of experience from the UK frame industry and 15 years of management and customer service skills, Sheldon Tessler said he was delighted to see how supportive the customer services team was. "Being able to source so much from one supplier is very valued by our partner practices," said Sheldon. "Porsche Design is particularly exciting – the quality and styling is absolutely wonderful," he added. ■

Important information for Contact Lens Examinations

31 JANUARY 2009 - Closing date for registering for Provisional APPROVAL of SUPERVISORS AND PRACTICES involved in the preparation of candidates for the SUMMER 2009 examinations for the CERTIFICATE IN CONTACT LENS PRACTICE.

Registration documents are available upon request from Gillian Hensley-Gray on 01227 732924 or email ghensley-gray@abdo.org.uk

1 MARCH 2009 - Those with partial success in the examinations for the CERTIFICATE in CONTACT LENS PRACTICE qualification should note

that from 1 March 2009, candidates will be required to retake any element/s of the Contact Lens Certificate examinations which were passed seven years or more years previously.

This ruling has been introduced in the light of the ever advancing status of contact lens practice and relates to theory examinations or sections of the practical examination.

This change does not affect those who already hold the CL Certificate or Advanced CL Diploma.

Examination Applications are available from January 2009 from the ABDO Examinations & Registration Department, The Old Dairy, Godmersham Park, Godmersham, Canterbury, Kent CT4 7DT, telephone 01227 732920/921 or email cbaker@abdo.org.uk

The closing date for examination applications for the Summer 2009 session is 5pm on 30 March 2009. Late applications will not be accepted.

Rosemary Bailey
Chief Examiner Contact Lens Practice

Newsbrief



Niall McCrudden proprietor of designersunglasses.ie with Brian wearing their Ray-Ban sunglasses

Here come the Men in Black

Brian Kennedy, one of the world's leading male singer/songwriters, recently called into the new sunglass showrooms of designersunglasses.ie in Dublin to choose some shades for his upcoming European tour.

Brian, who has played with Ray Charles, Van Morrison and The Corrs, and was lead singer on the original Riverdance, also sung at George Best's funeral. He has had hits around the world including *You Raise Me Up*, and *Carrickfergus*. After browsing through the showroom's extensive stocks, Brian chose some classic Ray-Bans from Luxottica. ■



New GOC Chair, Dr Geoffrey Harris

New GOC chair steps up

Dr Geoffrey Harris has replaced Rosie Varley as Chair of the General Optical Council (GOC). Ms Varley retired at the end of December after 10 years in the role, but will continue as a Council member until 31 March.

Dr Harris, who was appointed to the GOC in 2004 as a Privy Council nominee, will be Chair until 31 March. It is expected that he will then be appointed for a further four years from 1 April, once the new Constitution Order has received parliamentary approval.

He said: "I am honoured to have been given the



Gary Kousoulou of Goodlooking Optics takes a starring role in an educational film

opportunity to lead the GOC at a time when healthcare regulation is high on the public agenda. The GOC has always been a progressive organisation that is not afraid to adapt, challenge and lead the way. I look forward to working with the Council to ensure that we continue to anticipate and shape developments in this area in the interests of public safety."

Until April 2003, Dr Harris was a non-executive director of Stoke Mandeville Hospital NHS Trust, covering both the general hospital and the National Spinal Injuries Centre. He is a former non-executive director and

chairman of Buckinghamshire Mental Health NHS Trust, and a former member of the Public Health Laboratory Service. Dr Harris also chairs the South Central Strategic Health Authority.

Acting GOC Chief Executive and Registrar, Dian Taylor, commented: "Geoff brings a wealth of experience to the role. His understanding and experience of optical regulation is second to none, and his commitment to public protection is unwavering. I'm confident that under his leadership the new Council will be well-equipped to tackle the challenges ahead." ■

Ready for your close-up, Mr Kousoulou

A BDO Board member, Gary Kousoulou of Goodlooking Optics in Enfield had a taste of movie-stardom when he was chosen to feature in a short-film being shot on location in his town.

Former BBC director Martin Bisiker, of the film production company Biscuit Media, has been commissioned to produce the film by Examstutor.com, an online learning provider to schools and colleges across the UK. The film will give GCSE and A level Business Studies students a greater understanding of what it's really like to run your own business.

Martin Brown of Examstutor.com said: "We chose Goodlooking Optics for our first film, as like us they are based

in Enfield, and because of Gary's amazing energy and drive to succeed. We think he provides a fantastic example for Business Studies students around the UK of what it takes to be an entrepreneur today. We hope that his story of building a successful opticians in a competitive market, will both educate and inspire students currently studying business at school."

For Gary and Goodlooking Optics, a former winner of Best New Business in

Enfield and finalist in the National Opticians Awards, the opportunity to feature in the film, at the same time as he is opening a new Goodlooking Optics store in St Albans, was too good to pass up. He said: "I had already given talks at local schools about running your own business, and when I was approached by Examstutor I thought it was a great opportunity to help even more students studying business. Even though this is a busy time for us, opening a second outlet in St Albans, I was more than happy to take time out to support this project."

To gain a sneak preview of the Goodlooking Optics film prior to its release in October, visit www.examstutor.com ■



Jonathan Drury, Jennifer Brower, and Niamh Cummings



Emma Austin FBDO CL

Prizewinners at Anglia Ruskin University Graduation

Anglia Ruskin University held its Graduation Ceremony for Optometry and Ophthalmic Dispensing on Thursday 13 November.

Jonathan Drury won the ABDO prize for meritorious performance in the Ophthalmic Dispensing/Optical

Management Degree and Niamh Cummings won the ABDO prize for exceptional effort and determination in the Ophthalmic Dispensing/Optical Management Degree. Jennifer Brower, Vice President of ABDO presented them with their prizes. ■

Patient newsletters - can benefit for your practice

It is becoming increasingly important for practices to keep their existing patients and ABDO student member Siddika Pirbhai suggests sending patients a regular newsletter. Siddika's company, The Design House, will write these for you and can be contacted on 07804 208242 or email thedesignh@hotmail.com for details. ■

New practice manager for David Burghardt

Experienced contact lens optician Emma Austin has joined David Burghardt Vision Care in Lincolnshire as its new practice manager.

Emma, from Market Rasen, has 11 years' experience in the field of optics, having worked at Vision Express before spending nearly ten years at Specsavers as a manager and contact lens optician.

"I qualified as a dispensing optician eight years ago and then became a specialist contact lens fitter six years ago," said Emma.

"I became a contact lens optician so that I could

focus on building relationships with patients and excel in customer and health care, rather than concentrating solely on management aspects of the profession."

In addition to clinics at David Burghardt Vision Care in Nettleham, Emma will be available for consultations at its partner practice Vision Care in Lincoln.

"It's such a lovely practice and I'm looking forward to broadening my own horizons as the company covers so many different areas of specialist eye care which I am keen to learn about," said Emma. ■

Progress on revalidation scheme

GOC members have approved a set of initial proposals on the Council's approach to revalidation. The proposals form a draft framework to the scheme, and have been compiled by the Standards Committee in collaboration with other optical bodies. Full details of the revalidation scheme for optometrists and dispensing opticians are still to be decided.

The GOC will be encouraging registrants, optical bodies, patient groups and members of the public to contribute their comments throughout 2009 as the plans take

shape. The Council's draft proposals incorporate the key principles for revalidation as identified by the Department of Health, and will be presented to the Department of Health's National Working Group this month (January).

The key points include:

- The revalidation process takes place over two full three-year CET cycles; so one sixth of all eligible practitioners are revalidated each year.
- Revalidation will apply to optometrists and dispensing opticians who are active in clinical practice.

Registrants who are not practising will not need to be revalidated.

- Registrants who are successfully revalidated will have a 'license to practise'. Those who are registered but not practising (and therefore not subject to revalidation) will not be issued with a licence.
- Registrants will be 'risk profiled', whereby the nature of assessment is proportionate to the level of risk to the public.
- Existing schemes, such as CET, could be used as evidence toward revalidation.

The Council will begin work on a detailed implementation plan for revalidation early in 2009, and it is anticipated that revalidation itself will start in 2012. ■

Newsbrief



Petite styles for petite faces – from Stepper UK



Wildcard 110, new in the Columbia range from Norville

From one Xtreme to the other

Stepper UK has introduced a 'smaller size' line to its popular Xtreme fashion range called Xtreme Petites. With the same modern look and styling as the regular Xtreme range, models in the Petites line won't swamp the face of those with more delicate features.

Richard Crook, managing director Stepper UK, explained: "Xtreme Petites are not just smaller versions of existing styles; we started from scratch with each design to create a product line specifically for this market. We're fulfilling a need that wasn't well catered before. It's not a 'teen range' that adults can wear – it's more sophisticated than that."

There are 11 models of metal and plastic and combination styles, each with two colour options. Xtreme Petites feature as part of the updated Xtreme catalogue available on CD Rom.

For an updated copy of this, and for more information on the Xtreme range, telephone Stepper UK on 01732 375975. ■

New service is a welcome reminder

Practices with forgetful patients can benefit from a new contact lens reminder service from Johnson & Johnson Vision Care.

Called Acuminder, the new online service sends reminders to contact lens patients if they need to replace their contact lenses, purchase new ones or schedule an eye examination. The service has already proved a success in the USA and France and registration is completely free. Contact lens wearers can log on to the Acuvue website and sign-up to receive reminders via text or email in order to keep track of all their contact lens needs. Practitioners will be given an Acuminder pad that can be used to discuss the benefits of the service with patients to encourage them to register for the free service.

Chris Dimmack, marketing executive for UK at Johnson & Johnson Vision Care, said: "Johnson & Johnson Vision Care is dedicated to raising the awareness of eye examinations and eye health amongst the public and in helping drive patients into practice in any way they can. This new service is just another way that Eye Care Professionals can encourage their patients to take a more personal role in looking after their own eye health and encourage them to make more regular visits to have their eyes and contact lens prescriptions checked." Patients can sign up for Acuminder at www.acuvue.co.uk/acuminder ■

A walk on the wild side

Norville Eyewear has introduced several new models to its Columbia range. Designed for lovers of the rugged outdoors, the Columbia range suits all age groups and provides quality, comfort and great design.

Wildcard 110 (pictured) is a titanium and acetate mix supra with one piece cut away from the acetate temple. Wildcard 111 is a titanium full frame with moulded rubber temples, cut out design with metal inlay and featuring a sporty double bridge. Tabor 111 is a slight wrap full metal frame with plastic end tips. It features discreet branding and subdued colours, is sporty yet suitable for progressives. To view the complete range, visit www.norville.co.uk ■

Paris show award for Essilor lens

Varilux Ipseo New Edition, the premium Varilux design from Essilor, was awarded a Silmo d'Or prize for the lens category at a cocktail party hosted at Cinéaqua Aquarium in Paris on October 30. Essilor beat off tough competition from Carl Zeiss Vision with i.Scription to take the coveted award.

Varilux Ipseo New Edition lenses take personalisation to a new level thanks to Dual Digital Vision technology. This is a new way of using both sides of the lens to tailor Varilux Ipseo New Edition to the physiology of the individual wearer. Prismatic effects are controlled by splitting the Addition between the front and back surfaces of the lens in order to best suit the wearer's head and eye strategy. This unique feature is protected by two new patents.

The range, including materials, can also be found at www.essilor.co.uk. For more technical information, contact Essilor on 01454 423442. ■

Disjointed jottings from a grumpy old DO's desk . . .

John Pike has a cunning plan for the downturn - increase stock of high-value products

Biting back at the credit crunch

Ouch! Optics has just been bitten by the credit crunch and I think it's taken us all by surprise. Now that it's here, though, we have to take steps to deal with it.

It's difficult to plan a strategy during an economic downturn. Many consumers are strapped for cash and are putting off making significant purchases until the climate improves. Others are comparatively well-off but fearful of spending their money. The approach which opticians need to take to weather the economic storm will depend upon their patient profile.

It has long been my belief that there are two kinds of optical shopper. Market research will say otherwise, but in my opinion 70 per cent of consumers have price as their main priority and will choose their optician according to who has the best deals and discounts at the time of their eye examination. The other 30 per cent are looking for quality, value and above all service. The large optical chains will mop up most of the price-conscious patients, leaving the savvy independents to focus on the quality end of the market.

My own approach to this downturn may surprise some people. I have not reduced my prices, nor have I started to stock cheaper brands of frames. Instead, I have increased my stock of

high-value products from smaller manufacturers. We now have more titanium, rolled gold and crystal-studded frames in the practice than ever before. Our top price for a frame used to be £120; it is now £275 and we dispensed a frame of this value only last week. We continue to recommend high-index, multicoated lenses into any supra or rimless mount and always dispense 'top down', offering patients the best lens design first, but with absolutely no hard sell.

Now this strategy does not work for all of our patients. As I have previously mentioned, some people will 'trade-down' on their new spectacles for economic reasons. A few will take their prescriptions elsewhere for dispensing, but this is more than offset by the number of prescriptions which we gain from other opticians – usually for high-end products! At the risk of tempting fate though, the appointment book remains very healthy and our job trays seem to contain mainly good-quality coated lenses, the majority of which are not standard CR39. This, to me, is the pleasure of independent practice – being able to adapt quickly (if sometimes unconventionally) to circumstances and having a loyal following of patients who place service and good value above the ubiquitous lowest-cost option. I really hope that my marketing stance pays off – otherwise, please remember to

chuck a coin into my hat if you see me busking outside New Street station.

Although you'll be reading this article in January, it's nearly Christmas as I write it and I'm in my customary bah-humbug frame of mind. I'm not a Christmassy person, you see. I love the break from work and the socialising with friends and family, but I loathe the blatant commercialisation, the shopping frenzy and the implication that everybody should be happy at this time of the year, when in reality some people are broke and stressed-out while others are sad and lonely.

My staff try to cheer me up (wind me up, more like!) by humming Christmas songs, especially *Walking in a Winter Wonderland*, my all-time hated embodiment of enforced seasonal jollity. This year, I've managed to get my own back. I've found a selection of alternative Christmas ditties on Youtube, some of which I'm afraid to say are downright filthy, and my receptionist's rendition of *Jingle Bell Rock* will this year be countered with its '18 certificate' alternative. Maybe as a non-believer I miss out on the deeper meaning of the festive season, although this year I have amazed my family by announcing that I will be going to the Christmas morning service in my sons' school chapel – possibly because this time next year my wife and I will be empty-nesters. I am

always surprised at how moving and uplifting I find carol services – a combination, I suppose, of tradition, memories and family pride. When the school orchestra joins the chapel organ to give *O Come all ye Faithful* a good bit of welly, my vision tends to suddenly go very blurry - and I don't think it's the myopia.

But hark – I hear Christmas bells! Several of them, all jingling inside my practice. Is it Santa with his sleigh? Is Rudolph tethered to the post-box outside? Am I about to be rewarded for being a good boy all year? I peer round the door into the waiting area. Nope. No such luck. It's Phyllis, Doris and Ethel, three of our elderly patients. The local branch of Age Concern has been advising old ladies to tie bells onto their purses, to deter robbers from running off with them. (The purses, not the old ladies). You only need more than one lady octogenarian in the practice for it to sound like Santa's grotty grotto. Also, these three old dears are probably full of seasonal spirit in more ways than one – I reckon they've all been at the cooking sherry, the little tinkers!

So, as 2008 draws to a close and 2009 springs into life, I'd like to wish my optical colleagues a happy and (let's all hope) prosperous new year.

John Pike FBDO runs his own practice in Shirley, Solihull. ■

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New ABDO College reception staff, Lynnette Mahlaba (left) and Helen Lilley, visit Graham Legg at his I-Zone Opticians practice in Ashford

New faces at College reception

Visitors to ABDO College in Godmersham Park, Kent, can always look forward to a warm welcome at reception. The team has now been boosted by the appointment of Helen Lilley and Lynette Mahlaba. Helen has joined as a full-time receptionist, while Lynette Mahlaba will work three days a week.

Born and bred in Ashford, local member Helen has extensive retail experience having worked with various High Street outlets, including 13 years with WH Smith and a managerial position in a soft furnishings store. She also has several claims to fame, not least that she is a published poet attaining a nomination for 'Poet of the Year' in the US. She has also appeared on the TV programme *Bargain Hunt*. Married, with a daughter currently studying interior design at the nearby University of Kent, Helen enjoys sewing in her spare time and is a keen baker (her culinary talents were thoroughly enjoyed at a recent birthday celebration for a member of the ABDO College staff!)

Working alongside Helen three days a week is Lynette Mahlaba, who will fit in this part-time position while she studies politics and international relations at the University of Kent. Hailing from Harare in Zimbabwe, Lynette is the choir leader in her local church in Canterbury and has a passion for singing. Her ambition is to eventually go into politics in her

hometown of Africa, thereby following in the footsteps of her father.

As part of their induction programme, Helen and Lynette visited I-Zone Opticians in Ashford, where Graham Legg FBDO, practice director and ABDO Area 10 Chairman, and his friendly team provided an extremely useful insight into retail optics.

Helen said: "The visit to I-Zone sparked off so many questions - it really has got my thought processes going!" Lynette agreed, adding: "I am seeking the answers to so many questions and I am enjoying learning all about optics and eyecare." Indeed both were particularly impressed with a demonstration of the benefits of polarising lenses and the practice's extensive range of high quality designer frames and sunglasses.

Heading up the new reception team is College Technician, Sue Rose FBDO SMC (Tech), who has been promoted to reception team manager. Completing the new structure is Deanne Gray, who balances her workload as *Dispensing Optics'* Administration Manager with one day a week on reception at Godmersham.

Commenting on her promotion, Sue said: "I am delighted that I have been offered this opportunity to take on additional duties, and that I have a new and enthusiastic team to help me achieve our objectives." ■

**Better communication
could offset predicted
rise in consumer
complaints. Michael Potter
reports**

OCCS Conference

The Optical Consumer Complaints Service (OCCS) recently held a conference in London to enable open debate between its Management Committee and the corporate and professional optical bodies, which included representatives from ABDO.

During his opening address OCCS chairman David Burt emphasised the important role that the service provides by acting as a totally independent mediator between both parties when complaints are received. He explained that OCCS was determined in developing its strategy for future needs, with this aim in mind, encouraged support and contributions from those attending.

In his introduction administrator Richard Wilshin stated that OCCS is actively working to develop relationships with the optical profession and stressed, as an impartial mediator, that its remit is also to support the practitioner as well as the consumer.

A role play session was conducted and this highlighted typical examples of the consumer complaints received of which, in 2007, 55 per cent were resolved by verbal advice over the telephone. Common cases for complaint are 'Buy one, get one free' offers, dispensing to patients who have cataracts who subsequently require a prescription change after short period of time, demands for contact lens specifications and variance in cost and fees associated with contact lenses.

A series of informative presentations were given by each of the



The OCCS team (l-r): Eileen Riddiford - assistant administrator, Richard Wilshin - administrator, David Burt - chairman, Pamela Cann - assistant administrator

representatives of the various organisations participating and the subsequent debate outlined the overwhelming need for good communication between the practitioner and the patient and a common sense approach to problem solving. It should be noted, that based on experience, phrases such as 'a gesture of goodwill' and 'if our service has failed to meet your expectations' should be avoided as, despite being well meaning, these often in reality create a negative effect with the consumer. With complaints increasing in a more litigious society, speed of response is also frequently a key factor in resolving a problem.

Opticians should note that David Burt is confident to predict that consumer complaints will rise as the financial climate becomes tougher over the next few years. As a result of the conference debate he feels communication is the 'bedrock' to enable improved customer service during this anticipated difficult period

ahead. In the past OCCS has been mainly reactive and consequently is now looking to adopt a more strategic approach in the future.

ABDO pledges its support to OCCS and encourages its members to provide them with full cooperation should they be contacted regarding a consumer complaint. Remember the service acts as a mediator and this is as much in the practitioner's interest as it is the consumer's. Opticians can therefore also contact OCCS in the case of a dispute, although they cannot provide advice to practitioners, they will state the pertinent factors relevant to a specific complaint, this often helps to endorse the comments already provided by the optician to the patient.

The Optical Consumer Complaints Service can be contacted at PO Box 219, Petersfield GU32 9BY, telephone: 0844 800 5071, email postbox@opticalcomplaints.co.uk or www.opticalcomplaints.co.uk ■

Diary of events

January - March

Identity Optical Training - Pre-Registration Dispensing Programme for trainee DOs, those returning to the profession and pre-registration optometrists, 5-week course, 11am-4pm Mondays, £300, London. For further details contact Sally Bates on 020 8504 0967 or email identity@sallybates.com

January - May

Identity Optical Training - Optical Assistants VRQ (Vocationally Related Qualification) Level 3, 5 sessions, 1pm-6pm Mondays, £300, London. For further details contact Sally Bates on 020 8504 0967 or email identity@sallybates.com

January 13

ABDO Area Northern Ireland - CET evening event and AGM, including talks by Nikon and Transitions, Comfort Hotel, Antrim. For further details contact Lynn Mackey on 07719942306 or email lynnmackey@supanet.com

January 18

Area 12 (Scotland) - the next meeting will be held at the Marriot Hotel in Glasgow, during Eyecare 3000, with the room provided courtesy of Scott Mackie. Andy Hepworth from Essilor will present 'Protection from the sun's spectrum', while Phil Gilbert from Zeiss will discuss 'Physiological aspects of ophthalmic dispensing'. For further details contact Brenda Rennie by email brendarennie@f2s.com

February 9

Area 12 (Scotland) - Kevin Gutsell from Nikon Optical will speak at a meeting (TBC) at the Two Bridges, South Queensferry. Another speaker and topic are to be confirmed. For further details contact Brenda Rennie by email brendarennie@f2s.com

March 2

Area 5 (Midlands) - CET day at the Riverside Centre, Derby. For more details see Area news-round.

March 8

Area 3 (North West) - CET Sunday training day, Sports Vision is the theme at the Manchester Velodrome. For more details see Area news-round.

March 8 and 9

The College of Optometrists - Annual Conference, Optometry Tomorrow 2009, featuring a diverse range of lectures, seminars, and hands-on, small clinical workshops. For further details contact Janna Wilkinson on 020 7766 4343 or email Janna.Wilkinson@college-optometrists.org or visit www.college-optometrists.org

March 18

BCLA - One-day hands-on CET courses, 'Getting up to speed with contacts' and 'Enhancing expertise in contact lens practice', Cardiff University (Glasgow date to be confirmed). For further details visit www.bcla.org.uk or contact Vivien Freeman on 020 7580 6661 or email vfreeman@bcla.org.uk

March 23

Louis Braille Bicentenary - RNIB, Torch, Blind Catholics, Guild of Church braillists, St John's Guild, and others are organising a Louis Braille thanksgiving service to be held at St Martin's in the Fields, London. For further information email braille@rnib.org.uk

April 4-6

Optrafair - The NEC, Birmingham. For further details visit www.optrafair.co.uk

May 2009

Louis Braille Bicentenary - Traveleyes, a company specialising in holidays for blind and partially sighted people is organising a trip to France with a Louis Braille theme. For further information email braille@rnib.org.uk

May 28-31

BCLA - 33rd BCLA Clinical Conference and Exhibition, Manchester Central, Manchester. For further details visit www.bcla.org.uk or contact Vivien Freeman on 020 7580 6661 or email vfreeman@bcla.org.uk

October 3-5

ABDO - 2009 ABDO Conference and Exhibition, Hilton Brighton Metropole, Brighton. For further details contact the ABDO Conference Office (Event Exchange Ltd) on 01225 869 000 or email rsvp@eventexchange.co.uk or visit www.abdoconference.co.uk ■

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www.abdo.org.uk

ABDO members are welcome to attend Area meetings in any area they wish

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