

Newsletter

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President's Message

Lack of Spectacles Costs \$427 Billion is the headline of ECOO's latest press release (also distributed to ECOO members and posted on ECOO's website). 'Over 158 million people in the world are effectively blind because they do not have the spectacles they need to correct their vision', according to the press release, originally published as a research paper in *Bull World Health Organ* (2009;87:431-437) by TST Smith, KD Frick, BA Holden, TR Fricke and KS Naidoo.

The results of this study are a great challenge to optometrists and opticians around the world. In many countries our profession is the first point of entry to primary eye care. With the rising cost of medical care and the decline in the number of ophthalmologists in some European countries, primary eye care is being increasingly transferred to optometrists and opticians. Thus, the contents of the scope of optometric practice, together with an information campaign about our profession, have to be presented to the public and the authorities in the individual European countries and in Brussels.

For that reason, ECOO has started to issue regular press releases. Our most recent press release is intended to inform European citizens and opinion leaders about our profession as the qualified eye care provider in Europe. This will help to improve the reputation of our profession and will help ECOO and ECOO's members internationally and nationally.

There are many reasons why citizens in Europe should visit an optometrist or optician, as the visual needs of the population world-wide increase exponentially. One of these reasons is the changing visual requirements of the industrialized world.

To repeat, we optometrists and opticians have to inform the public about the services which can be offered by our profession.

For that reason the use of our press release and its distribution to all relevant opinion leaders in all European countries is so important for European citizens and for our profession.

Let us create a Europe in which every citizen knows that, as a respected eye care profession, optometry can meet the visual needs of society.

Therefore, dear colleagues, I urge you to use ECOO's press release.

Wolfgang Cagnolati
President ECOO



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ECOO Offers Models to Its Members

Following its recent meeting in Lausanne, ECOO is to publish two model projects for its member organisations. One is a model scheme for Continuing Education and Training (CET), for adaptation according to the professional and training conditions in particular countries. While CET is compulsory in some countries as a condition of registration for practice or membership of the professional body, in other countries CET remains voluntary. Nevertheless, despite such differences, many of the principles underlying the organisation of CET are common. The model to be offered by ECOO highlights these common principles.

The second model is a code of conduct for optometrists and opticians. The code is designed to be simple and for general use. It sticks to the matters that affect the day-to-day interaction between professionals and their patients and customers.

Both the CET model and the code of conduct will be posted on ECOO's website as soon as possible.

ECOO Lobbies for Association of Opticians and Optometrists of Serbia

Faced with a baffling new law on medical devices, the Serbian member of ECOO turned to ECOO for help. The law, due to come into force on 1 August, could make the sale of corrective optical appliances a bureaucratic obstacle for optical retail outlets in Serbia. As a result, ECOO has sent a letter to the Serbian Minister of Health, asking for clarification of the new law and suggesting that frames and lenses carrying the CE mark should be allowed unrestricted access to the Serbian market, rather than having to be certified a second time before they can be sold.

ECOO Responds to Austrian 'Krankenkasse'

ECOO has been asked by an Austrian 'sickness fund' (health insurance organisation) for information about the therapeutic and other functions of contact lenses. The Kärntner Gebietskrankenkasse asked whether, for example, contact lenses were effective in dealing with keratoconus and other conditions, including progressive myopia in young people. A full answer has been prepared by the President of ECOO, Wolfgang Cagnolati, with the assistance of Euromcontact.

ECOO Makes Progress in European Accreditation

It has been ECOO's ambition for a long time to establish a system to accredit the optometry courses offered by universities and schools of optometry, in relation to the ECOO European Diploma of Optometry. Now, work is underway, led by Adrian Jennings and Frank Buijs, to allow universities to 'benchmark' their courses against the competencies achieved by a holder of the ECOO Diploma, in other words against the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed for the practice of optometry at the highest level currently practised in Europe.

The basic principle of the system, soon to be tested in pilot projects in three countries, is a mixture of self-assessment by 'applicant' universities, followed by 'visits' by ECOO to the universities concerned. Depending on the level of course taught and the competencies and learning outcomes achieved by the students at a university, the optometric graduates of that university may be exempted some or all of the parts of the exams for the ECOO Diploma.

New ECOO Diplomates

Five successful candidates for the exams of the ECOO European Diploma of Optometry were awarded their certificates in May 2009 in Lausanne. They were Randy Freitag from Germany and Catherine Georgel, Juliette Hauguel, Ursula Gontero and Olivier Creach from France.



Left to right: Bob Chappell, Olivier Creach, Randy Freitag, Catherine Georgel, Ursula Gontero, Juliette Hauguel, Wolfgang Cagnolati and Richard Carswell

Diploma Computer to be Upgraded

The computer housing the multiple choice questions (MCQs) for the ECOO Diploma will be upgraded, to facilitate the translations to and from the principal languages currently in use for the Diploma, English, French and German. The upgrading will take the form of new software. The computer is situated in the offices of the Zentralverband der Augenoptiker (ZVA) in Düsseldorf, the location also of the Diploma's secretariat. Mrs Bärbel Scholtysik acts as the secretary of the Diploma Boards of Management and Examiners.

Transitions Optical to Sponsor ECOO

Transitions Optical has agreed to sponsor ECOO. In return for financial support from Transitions, ECOO will incorporate within its online newsletter - www.ecoo.info - a new 'Partner in Education' section, featuring content from the Transitions Healthy Insights education newsletter that covers healthy sight topics and product information. ECOO will also review and endorse Transitions' Teacher Guide of the School Program, aimed at educating on healthy sight and preparing the next generation of opticians and optometrists. In addition, ECOO will acknowledge Transitions Optical as a sponsor in its official publications and on its website.

'Partnering with ECOO aligns well with our company's mission. This partnership will enhance Transitions Optical's ongoing initiatives to help elevate awareness of the need for healthy sight, the importance of vision care and the benefits of sight-enhancing vision wear', said Emmanuelle Ribot-Mariotte, ECP Marketing Manager, Transitions Optical (Europe, Middle East and Africa). 'As a global education leader, Transitions remains strongly committed to providing professional education, tools and increased accessibility to news and information to support optometrists and opticians in delivering healthy sight to their patients. Transitions Optical has undertaken several initiatives to achieve this goal. This sponsorship gives us the opportunity to intensify our efforts for greater impact', explained Emmanuelle Ribot-Mariotte.

For more about Transitions, see <http://en-emea.transitions.com/>

Launch of European Academy

The European Academy of Optometry and Optics (EAOO) was officially launched on 16 May 2009 at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne. The President of the Academy is Dr Feike Grit (Netherlands), a former President of ECOO. The Vice President is Professor Roger Crelier (Switzerland). Other inaugural trustees are Dr Rob Hogan, Mrs Bryony Pawinska and Mr Nick Parker, all of the (British) College of Optometrists. In addition, trustees were elected to represent European educational institutions, ECOO member organisations and individual educationalists and practitioners. Among the new trustees is Jean-Paul Roosen of France, who for many years was the secretary of AEUSCO, the European Association of Schools and Colleges of Optometry and Optics. In preparation for the establishment of the European Academy, AEUSCO has been dissolved, and its former members are being encouraged to join the Academy.



Left to right: Eduardo Texeira, Gerhard Gschweidl, Christian Stebler, Jean-Paul Roosen, Bryony Pawinska, Feike Grit, Roger Crelier, Rob Hogan, Paul Murphy

More information is available from the European Academy at www.eaoo.info. A report on the meeting has also been published in the magazine *Optometry Today* <http://www.optometry.co.uk/newsview.php?id=660>

CLEER Project Extended



One year after it was launched in June 2008, the CLEER project has been extended to the end of 2009. CLEER's objectives are to collect data on any significant adverse incidents relating to the wearing of contact lenses in Europe and to use the data in discussion with European and national authorities about the regulation of the supply of contact lenses in order to ensure the protection of the public.

All Eye Care Professionals (ophthalmologists, optometrists and opticians) are invited to participate in the project. For further information, see www.cleer-project.eu

European Ophthalmologists Warn on Plano Coloured Lenses

Unlike correcting contact lenses worn to improve vision, non-corrective coloured contact lenses are not presently classified as medical devices. As a result they are not subject to the usual controls rightly imposed on corrective contact lenses by the EU's directive on medical devices (directive 93/42/CEE).

The ophthalmological section of the UEMS (Union of European Medical Specialists), which represents some 40,000 ophthalmologists across the EU, has emphasized that non-corrective coloured contact lenses are often used in clinical practice as a medical prosthesis to camouflage a damaged cornea, or therapeutically to block light so as to alleviate photophobia as seen in albinism, some congenital anomalies or trauma to the iris. They modify the anatomy of the anterior surface of the eye.

The UEMS goes on to explain that all contact lenses applied to the front of the eye alter the oxygenation and thereby the metabolism of the cornea. Whatever they are made of, the lenses must allow adequate oxygen transfer.



www.uems.net

The pigments used for colouring a lens must be non-toxic to the ocular surface. The lenses must be stored in sterile packaging to avoid contamination and germ transmission.

The cases published in the scientific literature in the last few years highlight the risks of severe corneal infection (infectious keratitis) associated with non-corrective coloured contact lenses. This may result in serious damage to the vision, in some cases requiring a corneal graft. In many cases, it is the total lack of information and advice on the rules of hygiene and maintenance of contact lenses which is at the root of infection. In fact, the unregulated sale of these products in supermarkets and on the internet deprives the customer, often an adolescent, from benefiting from recommendations on hygiene and maintenance usually given by a professional. A recent study has shown that the purchase of contact lenses over the internet is a factor in the risk of complications.

The United States and Japanese governments are aware of these problems and have favourably responded to pressure from professional organisations to class non-corrective coloured contact lenses as medical devices and tighten the control of their distribution. The UEMS insists that the European Commission and the Parliament should adopt similar measures for Europe.

ECOO Responds to EU Consultation on Driving and Safety

ECOO is joining forces with the European optical and contact lens industry to lobby the European Commission to take more account of good vision as part of safe driving. Responding to the Commission's consultation on road safety, ECOO, Euromcontact, Eurom and EFCLIN point out that eyesight is a parameter which plays a crucial role in safe driving and that, at the same time, eyesight can be easily and relatively cheaply checked. But tests of eyesight for driving vary widely between the member states of the EU. The situation offers an opportunity for sharing information and best practice between the member states. At the very least, as the EU directive on driving licences stipulates, where there is reason to doubt that a driver's visual acuity is adequate, attention should also be paid to the driver's field of vision, twilight vision and the presence of any progressive eye diseases. This raises the question of how often drivers' licences should be renewed, at which age and under which conditions.

Healthy Sight Institute

Transitions Optical, ECOO's new sponsor, has published its first newsletter under the banner of the Healthy Sight Institute, in which it highlights the dangers of ultraviolet (UV) radiation to eyes. It describes the sensitivity of ocular tissue to UV and the different pathologies that can be the result. The newsletter points out that exposure to UV radiation is 'a well-known risk factor in skin cancer' and that 'very few people are aware that the eye is the organ most likely to be damaged by UV.' It identifies the particular risks to children and the elderly. 'Prevent, Minimize and Control!' are the watchwords offered by the Healthy Sight Institute, as well as interesting and entertainingly presented information about healthy eating for the eyes. The full article is available at http://www.platforme-validation.com/HEALTHY_INSIGHTS/

Transitions Optical was the first to successfully commercialise a plastic photochromic lens in 1990.

As the global leading provider of photochromics to optical manufacturers, Transitions Optical offers the most advanced photochromic technology in the widest selection of lens designs and materials.

Transitions® lenses are the #1-recommended photochromic lenses worldwide. Transitions lenses are convenient everyday clear lenses that darken and adapt to changing light outdoors to reduce glare and help protect from harmful UV rays, so you can achieve and enjoy healthy sight - seeing better today and tomorrow. They continuously block 100 % of harmful UVA and UVB rays, helping to protect and preserve the health and well-being of your eyes.

Victory for Swiss Opticians

Screening for glaucoma by opticians is now allowed in the Canton of Aargau in Switzerland, as a result of a legal case brought against Brillen Trotter, an optometric firm run by Christian Stebler, who is also the president of the Swiss Optical Association (the SOV).

In July 2004 the Swiss Ophthalmological Association filed a claim with the Department of Health and Social Services of the Canton of Aargau against Brillen Trotter of Aarau. The ophthalmologists demanded that the optometric firm be ordered to 'remove all tonometers, perimetric equipment and fundus cameras from the business premises', since these instruments could mislead customers with the 'false promise' of medical examinations and diagnosis. The claimant also maintained that the early detection of glaucoma was part of medical prevention, which, according to the ophthalmologists, was solely the duty of ophthalmologists. The claimant argued that the Brillen Trotter was violating the health laws of the Canton of Aargau and that the owner of the firm must practise his profession solely in accordance with his education and practice permit.

On 19 February 2009 the Department of Health and Social Services of the Canton of Aargau dismissed the claim as unfounded. In short, after a long process, the authorities came to the decision that the higher

education and training which optometrists receive thoroughly qualified them to perform the examinations in question. The authorities certified that, although described by the ophthalmologists as 'medical amateurs without specialized ophthalmological knowledge', opticians were clearly able to ascertain suspected low pressure glaucoma through the use of field measurement and fundus observation. Deviations from the normal condition could be detected through tonometry, perimetry and fundus observation; and when any results were suspicious, further consultation by a medical doctor was recommended by the opticians.

The President of the SOV commented that 'through the use of appropriate procedures, opticians can contribute to the early detection of diseases of the visual system and can refer customers to a medical doctor. This brings benefits to public health and is politically and economically important. The prerequisite for assuming this responsibility is higher education and infrastructure, both based on state-of-the-art developments in science and technology. A partnership of interdisciplinary cooperation between opticians and the medical profession is especially important. The responsibility for the final diagnosis and possible therapy lies solely with a medical doctor.'

General Optical Council

ECOO to Reply to GOC Consultation

ECOO has been invited to reply to the consultation initiated by the General Optical Council (GOC) on its strategy for the next five years. The GOC is the competent authority which regulates optometrists and opticians in the United Kingdom. (Registration with the GOC is a requirement for optometrists and opticians wishing to practise in the UK.) The GOC's primary duty is to protect the general public.

In recent years the GOC has turned part of its attention to the issue of cross-border mobility and practice. For example, it is responsible for assessing the qualifications of optometrists and opticians from other EU states who wish to practise in the UK. It has also 'visited' the exams of the ECOO European Diploma of Optometry and made helpful suggestions on how the Diploma can be adapted, with a view to the GOC formally recognising the Diploma as a qualification sufficient for practice in the UK. Such suggestions could form the basis of the accreditation system currently being developed by ECOO. (See above.)

New President and President-Elect of WCO



President elect: Tone Garaas

The new President of the World Council of Optometry is Professor George Woo of Hong Kong. The President Elect is Tone Garaas of Norway. They were elected by the WCO's General Delegates Meeting in June 2009 in Melaka in Malaysia as President elect of the WCO. Tone is also Chairman of ECOO's Professional Services Committee, as well as being the general secretary of the Norwegian Optometric Association (Norges Optikerforbund).

The WCO has also appointed a full-time executive director, Caroline Hyde-Price, previously the head of the international office the UK's Health Protection Agency and, before that, the head of international affairs at the Royal College of Nursing and Midwives.

New Name for German Contact Lens Association

The VDC in Germany has changed its legal name to **Verein Deutscher Contactlinsenspezialisten und Optometristen (VDCO)** to reflect the reality of the professional situation. The organisation's focus will remain the field of contact lenses. This will be apparent at the next congress of the VDCO, *Contact 09*, which will take place on 25-27 September 2009 in Jena..

Aegean Summer School in Greece

The 8th Aegean Summer School in Visual Optics, organised by the University of Crete, will take place on 6-9 July 2009 at the University of Crete in Heraklion.

The Summer School is an international course organised annually and consists of lectures by international speakers on the fields of visual optics and vision sciences. The programme covers many aspects of basic and advanced research on physiological and visual optics, including basic research, instrumentation and clinical studies, with an emphasis on:

- refraction and ocular aberrations
- retinal image quality
- scattering in the eye
- crystalline lens and accommodation
- adaptive optics in vision research and ophthalmic imaging
- advances in spectacle, contact lens and intraocular lens design.

The Summer School targets ophthalmologists and scientists from the field of physics, mathematics, statistics, optometry or optics who are interested in learning more about the discipline of visual optics relate and its application to ophthalmology. For more information visit: www.ivo.gr/summerschool

AECE Launches Education Platform Accessible by Smart Phones

CIBA Vision is celebrating the one-year anniversary of the Academy for Eyecare Excellence (AECE), a professional education platform for eye care practitioners (ECPs). Since its launch, the AECE has expanded to 20 countries around the world, with more than 2500 ECPs participating in AECE programs in the United States during the past 12 months. 'Our goal is to be the preferred partner for ECPs by providing innovative professional education programs and practice development tools which help our customers enhance their clinical skills, while running a successful business', said Richard E. Weisbarth, OD, FAAO and Global Head, Professional Development and Partnerships for CIBA Vision. 'Giving practitioners the choice of participating in those programs in a classroom setting, from their desktop or laptop, and now from their smart phones, is an effective way of helping them improve their knowledge.' The AECE curriculum and programs can be accessed in two different ways: by visiting www.cibavisionacademy.com or by visiting the AECE website from a web-enabled mobile phone. A few select modules from the web platform are now available via mobile phone. (*Contact Lens Today* May 31, 2009)

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Waterloo University Caters for Expanded Optometry in Canada

The University of Waterloo school of optometry, Canada's only English-speaking optometric training institution, has opened a new extension. The 40,000-square-foot addition will accommodate the school's surge in enrolment to meet the high demand for eye-care professionals across the country. With a large atrium, the two-storey building expansion enhances the profile of the school. It provides additional teaching space, a 125-seat lecture theatre, a new home for the museum of vision science, as well as student group study rooms and quiet study rooms. It also provides expanded space for the laser surgery centre.



What's New on the Web?



The publication *Review of Optometry* has presented a new electronic case report programme. Entitled 'Retina Revealed', it provides clinicians with the latest technology in on-line case presentations.

Go to www.retinarevealed.com (*Review of Optometry* May 15, 2009)



Newsletter

The newsletter will be sent to members by e-mail or fax and we want to make sure it is received by every member:

Are your details up to date?

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charlotteverity@aop.org.uk

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS

ECOO takes this opportunity to thank its sponsors for their generous support.

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Hecht Kontaktlinsen www.hecht-contactlinsen.de

Johnson & Johnson www.jnj.com

Transitions Optical <http://en-emea.transitions.com/>

ECOO member state organisations should send relevant news and information which is of interest to all ECOO members to the ECOO office. Please email to: charlotteverity@aop.org.uk