Dear Colleagues,

Once more a summer is reaching its end in our part of the world. A summer full of sports events. Hold on, don’t stop reading now, thinking he is rambling on about sport again. Remember the last ECOO Newsletter, “It’s all about football”? However, after winning the European Football Championship, those Spanish didn’t stop and won subsequently also Wimbledon and the Tour de France. Leaving nothing for us! An amazing achievement, to win three such top prizes in one summer. Congratulations to Juan Carlos, Nacho and Jesus!!

Fortunately we could take revenge during the Olympic Games in China. Great Britain (4), Germany (5), Italy (9), France (10) and even a small country like The Netherlands (12) ranked higher than Spain (14) in the final Olympic Medal Table. Sweet revenge! These Olympics generated an extraordinary amount of criticism from other countries. Nevertheless, thanks to the Games in China, Tibetan human rights received more attention than ever and pollution in Beijing was never less than this summer. Pollution was tackled by just moving the polluting factories out of Beijing and restricting car drivers to using their car only every other day. Very rational, very systematic. And indeed, it worked. Johan Cruyff, the famous football player, became immortal in The Netherlands by apt statements as “Every disadvantage has an advantage!” The Olympic Games in China were, probably, the best organised Games ever, a challenge for the UK to improve on in London in 2012.

Now, coming to optometry! Always look for symmetry, analogy! China is one of those very few countries where optometry has not evolved from optics. Where opticians did not gradually increase their scope of practice, take on more responsibilities, become optometrists! No, in China optometry is systematically planned by the government! Like this year’s harvest of Olympic Medals. During my time in ECOO I have learned that the development of optometry differs in every ECOO member state. And in one of the smallest countries of Europe, Switzerland, it differs even in every one of its 26 cantons! In strong contrast to the European Union’s largest country, Germany, where one national legislation regulates the scope of practice of Augenoptik for all 16 states. The reason for these differences is cultural, historical and legislative.

The last few years have given me the privilege to observe these differences at close range. It has reinforced my conviction that ECOO is on the right track, that only harmonized education will lead to a uniform standard of practice and eventually to free mobility of practitioners. The European Diploma in Optometry is in this process a unique instrument. It really is exceptional that so many different people, cultures and languages have united to pursue the single vision of the optometrist as an autonomous practitioner who contributes to the eye care needs of society. ECOO is the platform where we discuss and develop, help and inspire. We must continue along this pathway. Together we are strong. But Europe can also learn from other parts of the world. It will be interesting to see how Chinese optometry develops in coming years.

Coming back to the Olympics, the first joint meeting of ECOO and the European Academy of Optometry and Optics takes place next year in Lausanne, Switzerland. Lausanne, the home of the International Olympic Committee. Note in your diary, May 15–17, 2009. The meeting will take place in the Olympic Museum see www.olympic.org/museum! Do you now understand why this newsletter is about the Olympic Games??

And don’t forget the 2008 Autumn meeting, in Istanbul, 7-9 November. I hope to see you all there!

Feike Grit
Contemporary Contact Lens Practice Is Still Risky
by Judith Morris MSc FCOptom FIACLE

Two recent publications in Ophthalmology have highlighted that Microbial Keratitis (MK) is still a significant problem for all wearers of contact lenses and that one of the new risk factors is the significance of where the lenses are bought.

The 2 year prospective case-controlled study on Risk factors for Microbial Keratitis with Contemporary Contact Lenses led by John Dart discusses the results of 367 cases of contact lens wearers attending Moorfields Eye Hospital, UK, with proven or presumed MK. For comparison the controls were 1069 hospital based patients who were CL wearers with a disorder unrelated to CL wear, and 639 population-bases controls who were CL wearers randomly selected from Moorfields catchment area.

Compared with planned replacement soft lenses there was a 1.5 times significant increase of MK with daily disposables, which differed between brands. The risk was reduced by 5 times for RGPs and no difference for silicone hydrogels or other types of soft lenses. The interesting finding was the significant risk of MK with daily disposable lenses and that 30% of daily disposable wear users are sleeping in them on an occasional or regular basis. Obviously this 'off-indication' use increases the risk of MK. As there was a difference in risk between brands it suggests contact lens design or polymer factors are implicated.

The conclusions were that the risk of MK has not been reduced in users of daily disposables nor silicone hydrogels. But it was found that vision loss was less likely to occur in daily disposables than in reusable soft lenses users. Different brands of CL do seem to be associated with significantly different risks of MK and the findings suggest that lens/ocular surface interactions may be more important in the development of corneal infection than oxygen levels and CL case contamination.

The second study led by Fiona Stapleton looked at the Incidence of Contact Lens-Related Microbial Keratitis in Australia. This was a prospective 12 month population-based surveillance study. They identified 285 eligible cases of contact lens-related MK and 1798 controls.

The results for an annualized incidence per 10,000 wearers showed:

- RGP 1.2
- DW SCL 1.9
- SCL (occasional overnight use) 2.2
- Daily Disposable 2.0
- Daily Disposable(occasional overnight use) 4.2
- DW SiHy 11.9
- SiHy(occasional overnight use) 5.5
- EW SCL 19.5
- EW SiHy 25.4

The risk factors concluded were the usual; overnight wear, poor storage case hygiene and smoking. But the interesting risks were Internet purchase of CLs, less than six months experience of CLs and higher socio-economic class. Internet sale lenses showed a 4.76 increased MK risk than when bought from an optometrist. Not surprisingly the conclusions were that overnight use of any contact lens is associated with a higher risk than daily wear but new lens types have not reduced the incidence of disease significantly.

The interesting conclusion of internet sales being a risk factor increases the need for further identification of this result and is why signing up for the CLEER project is important in Europe. The CLEER project (The Contact Lens European Evidence Reporting Project) is a one year web-based project, coordinated by the ECLF (European Contact Lens Forum). The project's goal is to provide factual data (evidence) about significant incidents in Europe induced by, or related to contact lenses (including non-corrective or cosmetic lenses). The data will be used to support efforts to regulate the supply of contact lenses in Europe in order to ensure the protection of the public. www.CLEER-project.eu

It appears that whatever materials or mode of wear is used it is evident that patient compliance with instructions related to their eye health is key to avoiding infection, so with their consumer-lead ideals it means advice is also needed on buying their contact lenses.
News Release

‘The CLEER Project’
(Contact Lens European Evidence Reporting)
Three Months Progress Report

Brussels - September, 2008

After just three months since the start of the CLEER project, more than 70 Eye Care Practitioners (Ophthalmologists, Opticians and Optometrists) from 10 countries have registered as reporters on the website www.CLEER-project.eu.

The number of reports themselves has also increased steadily since data collection started on June 1 2008 (the total is now above 50). The collection will continue for another nine months.

The CLEER project (The Contact Lens European Evidence Reporting Project) is a one-year web-based project, coordinated by the ECLF (European Contact Lens Forum). The project’s goal is to provide factual data (evidence) about significant incidents in Europe induced by, or related to contact lenses (including non-corrective or cosmetic lenses). The data will be used to support efforts to regulate the supply of contact lenses in Europe in order to ensure the protection of the public. Such regulative legislation already exists in the UK and the US. Japan is considering introducing similar legislation after a study showed serious adverse incidents with non-corrective lenses.

“The strong start and building momentum is very encouraging and shows that the European Eye Care Professionals understand the importance of the CLEER Project. Recent regulation of non corrective coloured contact lenses in Japan show that this is not an isolated effort in Europe alone,” said EUROMCONTACT’s president Helmer Schweizer.

If you haven’t registered yet, go to www.CLEER-project.eu, to do so. If you would prefer to fax your report to your national ECP organization for data entry, you can ask them for a report form or download it from the website.

The website also has a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) tab, in which one can find answers to many questions around the European Contact Lens Forum (ECLF), which established the website for the data collection and other information around the CLEER project.

CLEER project does not replace the post market surveillance / vigilance systems of the manufacturers. CLEER is independent to brands and manufacturers.

The European Contact Lens Forum (ECLF) consists of the following members (in alphabetical order):

- the European Contact Lens Society of Ophthalmology (ECLSO)
  www.eclso.eu
- the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO)
  www.ecoo.info
- the European Federation of the Contact Lens Industry (EFCLIN)
  www.efclin.com
- the European Federation of National Associations and International Manufacturers of Contact Lens Products (EUROMCONTACT)
  www.euromcontact.org
- the European representative of the International Association of Contact Lens Educators (IACLE)
  www.iacle.org

Please address any inquiries to:
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or
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EUROMCONTACT President
helmer.schweizer@cibavision.com

www.CLEER-project.eu and www.euromcontact.org
UK Optical Bodies warn: “Don’t lose sight of the risks when buying contact lenses”

Two new studies from Australia and the US have also suggested increased risks associated with purchasing contact lenses online. The risk of serious infection was found to be nearly five times higher. Consumers who bought contact lenses from sources other than their eye care practitioner were found to be less likely to comply with good eye care practices.

Professor Roger Buckley, an adviser to the General Optical Council, said: “Any contact lens is in direct contact with the eye. That carries a risk of irritation and infection, especially if instructions are not carefully followed, which could lead to long term problems for the wearer.

“It’s incredibly important to have a fitting before wearing contact lenses for the first time, and to have regular check-ups. Contact lens wearers should get professional advice to avoid putting their eyesight at risk.”

Sales of contact lenses are regulated to protect consumers from eye health problems. Sellers, including internet retailers, must check customers’ ‘specification’, issued by their contact lens practitioner, before supplying corrective lenses. Zero-powered lenses (that change the colour or appearance of the eye rather than correct eyesight) can only be sold under supervision of a registered optometrist, dispensing optician or medical practitioner.

Around 3.4 million people (seven per cent of all adults) in the UK wear contact lenses. Contact lenses offer many benefits to wearers and serious infections are normally rare, affecting only four in 10,000 wearers per year. The GOC and British Contact Lens Association have issued a joint leaflet on ‘Buying Contact Lenses’ to encourage safe practice among consumers buying contact lenses. The leaflet and further advice are available from the GOC website, www.optical.org or the BCLA website, www.bcla.org.uk.

EUROM 1 UNITES EUROPEAN MANUFACTURERS IN UK

Europe’s optical manufacturing leaders gathered recently at an FMO hosted conference to address the challenges faced by globalisation, increased South-East Asian production, the growing challenge from counterfeiting, and internet sales, all within the context of the current depressed economic market.

EUROM 1 Chairman Antoni Olivella, and CEO of INDO, spoke of the “complete transformation of the optical manufacturing industry” and the challenges ahead.

Welcoming delegates - who came from France, Germany, Switzerland, Italy and Greece to join the FMO delegation at the Windsor conference - he said they had a responsibility for “the betterment of our industry”.

“EUROM 1 seeks to reach out to all of Europe on all aspects of vision. It makes no sense to diverge efforts with common areas. We should speak with one voice, thereby gaining strength and standing within the EC,” he said. The appointment of Betrand de Limé as EUROM 1’s Executive Director, following an international career with Essilor, and increased contact with the European Commission is already bringing tangible benefits for Europe’s optical industry. Changes have been made to Medical Device legislation through closer liaison and the growing challenge from counterfeiting, and internet sales, all within the context of the current depressed economic market.

Mr Olivella highlighted the need for closer co-operation and the need to fight “the trivialisation of our products, and the commoditisation of a large part of the market with private brands, discounts and gifts…. and the strong emergence of online sales”.

“After major investment in R&D, months of experimentation and investment in equipment, testing and launch costs, it makes no sense to allow distribution to become trivial. We should ensure that we have a strong voice in order to protect the endeavours made in our industry.”

Ensuring fair competition, protecting social rights, covering risks and supporting workers in this sector are key objectives

“Eurom 1, in conjunction with Brussels and the WTO, must ensure that basic social standards are met by companies manufacturing products for Europe and the rest of the world. The struggle for competitiveness entails a constant industrial delocalisation and subcontracting with lower labour costs which has an increasing bearing on our industry,” said Mr Olivella.

“We can directly implement manufacturing in these countries, taking advantage of the low cost, but with two alternatives: a social responsibility policy or corporate social irresponsibility. Both models co-exist nowadays, though one under a notion of unfair competitiveness, with no social principles from our Western society.”

Mr Olivella reported on EUROM 1’s progress during the year, particularly with technical issues that included the new FDA drop ball test, mounted spectacle lens quality standards and greater exchange of data between European partners. The intention is for EUROM 1 to draw in other member countries to secure a unified voice for the entire optical industry.

EUROM 1 UNITES EUROPEAN MANUFACTURERS IN UK
An Internet retailer was on 3rd September ordered to pay over £60,000 as the General Optical Council (GOC) successfully concluded a criminal prosecution for illegal sales of contact lenses.

Vision Direct pleaded guilty to six offences of selling contact lenses without a valid specification and without the supervision of a registered doctor or optician. Sale and supply of optical appliances are regulated under the Opticians Act.

The charges related to test purchases carried out by the GOC’s solicitors in May 2007.

Following their guilty pleas at Hendon Magistrate’s Court, Vision Direct were ordered to pay a fine of £3,600 for each offence – a total of £21,600 – and to pay the GOC’s legal costs of £39,296. Passing sentence, the district judge stated: “This is important legislation, which has the protection of the general public at its heart. The defendants appear to have paid lip service to the legislation and to the duty of care that they owed to members of the public.”

Dian Taylor, acting chief executive of the GOC, said: “This is a significant result for the Council. The law is designed to protect consumers from eye health problems by ensuring that qualified professionals are involved in prescribing and selling contact lenses. We will continue to take action in the interest of public safety against companies who breach those rules.”

“The GOC is currently investigating other alleged offences and will not hesitate to bring further prosecutions in the criminal courts should it be necessary. I would urge all other online retailers to ensure that their processes are compliant with the legislation.”

All contact lenses should be fitted by a qualified optician or doctor, and lens wearers are advised to have regular check-ups.

Contact lenses sit directly on the eye, and can potentially cause irritation and infection. Wearers could become intolerant, and not be able to use contact lenses in future. However, in the most serious cases, problems could result in vision loss and blindness.
The 2008 HPCB Spring Meeting was hosted by the Dutch Ministry of Health and RIBIZ at the Royal Theatre, in The Hague on Monday 30th June. The purpose of the one-day conference style event was to consider and commence implementation of the regulatory actions set out in the HPCB Portugal Agreement. Over 60 delegates from 19 European countries attended the meeting, who participated through making presentations, contributing to discussions, networking and taking part in group work.

The meeting was opened by regular HPCB meeting chair, Jos Van Den Heuvel, researcher for the Dutch health research organisation NIVEL and former Chief Dental Officer of the Netherlands. A formal welcome address was then given by Gerrit Arkesteijn, Managing Director of CIBG – an agency if the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, who spoke of the importance of the meeting and the HPCB initiative generally.

The first session was on the theme of Identifying Shared Principles of Regulation, relating to Strand 1 of the Portugal Agreement.

Nella Korhonen of the Finnish National Authority for Medicolegal Affairs discussed the regulatory approach and legal basis for professional healthcare regulation in Finland and the scope of the National Authority’s work. She emphasised the importance of maintaining patient safety and the obligations placed on healthcare professionals to maintain this. She went on to explain that the National Authority has already implemented the HPCB Certificate of Current Professional Status, supports the Portugal Agreement and also makes use of the European Commission’s IMI system. She finally highlighted the way in which regulation in Finland is implemented in accordance with the five principles of good regulation.

Adriaan Duivesteijn of RIBIZ began by outlining the range of organisations with a professional healthcare regulatory/disciplinary role in the Netherlands. He went on to describe the purpose of the register of healthcare professionals, The BIG-Register, and the range of information drawn from it that is available to the public in the context of transparency. He explained that a system of re-registration for nurses, midwives and physiotherapists would be implemented in 2009. It would be rolled-out to other professions subsequently. Finally, he made reference to the process by which 3rd country qualifications are recognised in the Netherlands and emerging concerns in this area.

Per Haugum of the Norwegian Registration Authority for Health Personnel opened by questioning the purpose, means and outcomes of healthcare regulation and considering whether it is possible to identify principles of regulation shared by all jurisdictions in Europe. He outlined the existing shared principles as defined in the Edinburgh Agreement and further clarified in the Portugal Agreement. He went on to set out why health professional should be regulated and the effect of that regulation.

Theme two was Competence Assurance of European healthcare professionals that reflects the third strand of activity contained within the Portugal Agreement.

Theo van Berkestijn of the Dutch Ministry of Health spoke about the system in the Netherlands for recognising the medical qualifications of non-EEA trained doctors. He began by describing the role of the Committee for Foreign Healthcare Degree Holders and the diversity of national assessment procedures within Europe. He went on to explain the Dutch assessment procedure for 3rd country qualified doctors that includes the testing of clinical skills using an OSCE-method. Of particular concern is that not all EEA countries have such assessment procedures in place. This could give rise to a patient safety risk. In particular, if some doctors are looking for a ‘weak link’ by which to become registered in Europe – as a route to gaining EC rights – they may choose a country where there are less robust systems of recognition and assessment of 3rd country qualified doctors.

Theo called on HPCB to support this view and work with the Dutch to call for a more robust and consistent approach across Europe.

Paul Philip, Deputy Chief Executive of the General Medical Council in the UK, described the UK’s plans for implementing a system of performance assurance for doctors known as Revalidation. This will have two core elements: ‘re-licensing’ for all doctors in active practice and ‘re-certification’ for specialist doctors. The process of implementing Revalidation would commence with re-licensing in 2009. The process would be cyclical and have a summative and formative purpose i.e. to both reflect on a doctor’s practice and learning and to further develop it. Paul went on to explain why there was a need to develop such a system of performance competence assurance in the UK and speak more generally about changing attitudes towards the medical profession by patients and the public.

William Kennedy of the Irish Medical Council described the current approach towards competence assurance of the medical profession in Ireland and to highlight a number of recent high profile cases and inquiries that have demanded a change in approach to assuring the ongoing fitness to practise of medical practitioners. He explained the elements of the new Medical Practitioners Act 2007 that places a duty upon the Medical Council to satisfy itself as to the maintenance of professional standards and competence of all doctors. He concluded with three goals of the Irish Professional Competence Program: to ensure doctors are providing good care in practice; to ensure that doctors are aware of recent advances in medicine and have potential to treat broad range of less frequent but medically important problems; and to ensure that doctors exhibit professionalism.

The final session involved delegates breaking into four small discussion groups on the theme of Transparent and Accessible Healthcare Regulation. This reflects strand 2 activity contained within the Portugal Agreement. Each group considered the following questions:

1. What information do you currently make publicly available about the healthcare professionals you regulate? How do you provide access to this information?

2. Why have you chosen to make this information available? Why have you used certain formats, for example, websites, to make this information available?

(Continued on page 7)
3. What information would you like to make publicly accessible but are currently unable to? Why has your organisation not yet made this information available?

4. How can the obstacles you face be overcome?

5. If regulatory information about healthcare professionals is not publicly accessible, what is the impact on patient safety?

6. Are there further areas of collaborative work in this area for healthcare regulators in the future?

7. Following the spring meeting, how will you discuss access to regulatory information within your own organisation?

The remarks of these groups included the following:

- Most competent authorities have publicly accessible information on their websites but the extent of information available differs widely.
-Disciplinary information should be shared with other regulators even when cases are on-going if it is in the interests of public safety.
- The main obstacles to transparent and accessible information are national privacy rules.
- Regulators should do what they can to reduce the risk that impaired practitioners can move from country to country, if there is a patient safety risk.
- Some countries have developed greater regulatory transparency following political, professional and attitudinal changes.
- It is considered important to stop ‘bad apples’ from practising and to provide retaining where that is appropriate.

The event was drawn to a close by Jos Van den Heuvel who set out the general conclusions of the day. These were that:

There was strong support for Strand 1 & 2 of the Portugal Agreement.

- There is a diverse approach to regulation in Europe but the regulation of qualifications should go hand in hand with continued performance enhancement and assurance of current competence.
- There should be a consistent approach to assessment and registration of non-EEA graduates across Europe.

Three main next steps were identified for the HPCB initiative:

- Concrete feedback should be obtained from all HPCB participants.
- Feedback should be obtained as to all achievements to date.
- There should be further work to implement the Portugal Agreement by member states.

The next meeting of HPCB would take place in Winter 2008 at a location to be confirmed.

Healthcare Regulators Deepen Co-operation

Healthcare Professionals Crossing Borders (HPCB) is the name of the developing co-operation between healthcare regulators in Europe. The principles of good regulation to preserve the safety of patients, as well as the mobility of professionals within Europe, have been agreed by regulators. But the challenge facing regulators is to put those principles into effect. A practical example of meeting the challenge is the Memorandum of Understanding reached this summer by some regulators. The Memorandum can be viewed on the HPCB’s website: http://www.hpcb.eu/hpcb/news/

Patients' Rights in Cross-Border Healthcare

The European Commission has put forward a new proposal for a directive to facilitate cross-border healthcare in Europe. The draft directive concentrates on the conditions under which patients should be able to seek, receive (and be reimbursed the cost of) healthcare in other member states than their own. In effect, the draft directive (which must be approved by the European Parliament and Council of Ministers) codifies the rulings of the European Court of Justice on recent cases of individual citizens seeking healthcare in another member state. The proposal does not affect the rights of professionals to establish themselves or to provide temporary services in another member state.

The text of the draft directive can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_overview/co_operation/healthcare/docs/COM_en.pdf
The World Council of Optometry (WCO) announced in June that the College of Optometrists (UK) has successfully won the bid to host its secretariat and management services. From 1 July, the College became the worldwide base for both the WCO and its charitable arm the World Optometry Foundation (WOF).

The WCO is an international optometric association representing over 200,000 optometrists in 40 countries. The WCO aims to facilitate the enhancement and development of eye and vision care worldwide, the WCO’s goals are closely aligned with the College’s own objectives, particularly in developing the science and practice of optometry.

Commenting on the announcement, Dr Rob Hogan, President of the College of Optometrists said: “This is a significant achievement, of which the College team is justifiably proud. It demonstrates that the College is held in high regard internationally and provides a real opportunity for us to enhance the UK’s international reputation and voice.” The award of this contract will lead to significant benefits for College Members as it works to develop a better understanding of international methods of practice and benefits from the opportunity to influence policy and practice globally.

Dr Robert Chappell, President of the WCO explained: “As well as helping to improve the quality and availability of eye and vision care worldwide the College of Optometrists will gain a unique opportunity to enhance its knowledge, relationship and recognition within the global optometric and public health community. After a very competitive bidding process the WCO is delighted to award the secretariat to the College of Optometrists. The College demonstrated a very clear understanding of the WCO’s needs and key priorities moving forward and I look forward to working with them over the coming years”.

The College has appointed Ms Laura Prieto as the WCO administrator and interpreter, and will shortly be advertising for a full time WCO Executive Director.

Pennsylvania College of Optometry has provided the secretariat for the World Council of Optometry for the past twelve years. Following an initial transition period, the secretariat will be hosted by the College of Optometrists for a period of at least three years.

Our colleagues at the Turkish Association inform us that the organisation of the ECOO 2008 Meeting in the Autumn in Istanbul, Turkey, goes smoothly and according to plan. The venue is the Polat Renaissance Hotel, a luxury five star hotel located near the airport and directly on the shores of the Marmara Sea. Our colleagues in Istanbul succeeded in securing rooms in this hotel at very competitive rates. We all look forward to meet in this beautiful city and enjoy the legendary hospitality of our Turkish friends. The meeting could be one of the most important meetings in ECOO’s recent history since important decisions have to be made, for example about the European Academy of Optometry & Optics.

Information about the meeting venue, see: http://www.polatrenaissance.com.tr

The program, registration and hotel booking form can be downloaded from the ECOO website: http://www.ecoo.info/mm/BookingFormECOO_Istanbul2008incAccompanyingPersons.pdf
Augenoptiker/Optometrist per Population in Germany

Optikernetz, the ZVA weekly E-newsletter, informed us about the density of optometrists in the 16 German Federal States per 31-12-2007. The highest number of shops exists in Saarland, one shop per 6,915 population, almost twice as much as in Sachsen-Anhalt, one shop per 11,131 inhabitants. Interesting is that Sachsen-Anhalt has also a considerable lack of ophthalmologists, patients have to wait many months for an appointment. The need for eye care professionals is so urgent that the Sachsen-Anhalt health service and medical associations now offer a Niederlassungsprämie of € 50,000 (premium) to motivate ophthalmologists to practise in certain regions of the state. Isn’t it time that, for the sake of the patient, ophthalmology and optometry stop making war and join forces to find a solution? And not only in Germany. This problem of shortage of eye care practitioners exists also in other parts of Europe! The need for eye care will continue to grow all over Europe. Give Optometry a Chance to Contribute!!

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From Herr to Professor, from Frau to Professorin

Our colleague Roger Crelier, Chairman of the ECOO Education Committee and member of the ECOO Executive Committee, informed us about some very pleasant developments at the School of Optometry at the University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland (Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz - FHNW). Roger and four of his colleagues have been granted the title of Professor or Professorin.

It was only in July 2007 that the Swiss Optical Association (SOV), after more than 30 years of running the Swiss school, transferred its responsibilities for the education of optometrists in Switzerland to the FHNW. The newly established Institute of Optometry in Olten became part of the FHNW School of Engineering. There was a period of transition, the last final exams of the old school will be held in not later than 2011, the last course in the French language will come to an end in 2008. All obligations (faculty, staff, contracts, etc.) as well as the complete infrastructure (e.g. instruments!) moved from the SOV to the university.

Now, after only one year, the university has decided to appoint five members of the core team of the school to professor. It is a compliment for the quality of the Swiss optometry education and a compliment for the wise decision of the Swiss association to join the university system.

Professor Michael Goldschmidt, Professor Stephan Gutzwiller, Professor Dr Roland Joos and Professorin Andrea Müller, please accept our sincere congratulations. And last but not least, the Institutsleiter, our friend Professor Roger Crelier, congratulations! You did a good job!!
People in the News

British optometrist Sarah Morgan was recently in the news for quite different reasons. Sarah is a well-known, respected optometrist and staff development consultant in Bolton, Lancashire, UK. Her book "The Complete Optometric Assistant" has just come out at Elsevier's and provides a comprehensive and practical guide to front-line practice staff for best service to clients. The book covers in 302 pages all aspects of optometric practice such as contact lenses (especially care procedures), different types of lenses and their application, different prescriptions, presbyopia and the types of ametropia, the fundamentals of degenerative eye conditions such as cataract, glaucoma and macular degeneration and discusses also administrative skills, how to deal with clients sympathetically and tactfully, etc. Comprehensive and practical, The Complete Optometric Assistant is indispensable reading for all front-line practice staff, as well as being enormously useful to students and dispensing opticians.

For more details, see: http://www.elsevierhealth.com/product.jsp?isbn=9780750688888

Sarah was also in the news for a completely different reason. As a stand-up comedian she won last June the Nivea Funny Women 2-Hour Challenge at The Lowry in Manchester. Absolutely amazing is that she had never done stand-up before and performed just two hours after completing a comedy workshop!

Her act can be watched at: http://nl.youtube.com/watch?v=622pWXXw8kc.
Changes at the GOC

Peter Coe, a frequent delegate to ECOO meetings, has retired from his position as chief-executive of the General Optical Council (GOC) in London. Dian Taylor succeeds him as Acting Registrar until the new structure of the Council is implemented in April 2009.

The GOC is the regulator for the optical professions in the UK. Its purpose is to protect the public by promoting high standards of education and conduct amongst optometrists and opticians. The Council currently registers around 22,000 optometrists, dispensing opticians, student-optometrists, student-opticians and optical businesses. ECOO has cooperated intensively with the GOC over recent years to bring the European Diploma in Optometry at today's high level. Peter Coe was instrumental in this process.

We all know Peter as a sympathetic and enthusiastic personality, always willing to help practitioners in other countries. ECOO will miss him. ECOO attended Peter's retirement luncheon on July 3rd in London and invited Kate Fielding, Head of Communications at GOC, to contribute about Peter's departure from the GOC in this Newsletter.

GOC bids farewell to Peter Coe

By Kate Fielding

Peter Coe is not your average Chief Executive. In his seven years at the helm of UK optical regulator, the General Optical Council, he has brought a unique and colourful approach. Owner of a Triumph Thunderbird Sport, he usually arrives at work in his motorcycle leathers. The GOC’s building in Harley Street bears evidence of his interests in art and antiques, though fortunately he has refrained from indulging his passion for archaeology – until now.

As Peter steps down on his sixtieth birthday, at the end of July, he has garnered praise for building links with optical bodies and stakeholders, on both the national and international stages. Council chairman Rosie Varley paid tribute to his achievements: “We are very sorry to see Peter go. He has done an incredible job in modernising the GOC and building the foundations for our current programme of reform. There has been wide acknowledgement of his contribution, and in particular of his open style, which has transformed the GOC’s relationships with partner organisations.”

Prior to joining the GOC, Peter’s career was largely in the National Health Service, latterly as Chief Executive of the East London and City Health Authority, managing a £900m budget and 15,000 staff.

Heading up a small organisation offered a drastically different challenge. However, Peter brought invaluable experience of dealing with health systems, as well as a clear focus on clinical excellence and public health.

During his time with the GOC, the organisation has gained recognition across professional optical bodies in Europe as one of the leading regulatory bodies in European optometry. The GOC code of conduct and approach to continuing education and training have both been widely accepted as models.

In the education arena, he has encouraged a collaborative approach, with the result that the GOC has worked closely with colleague bodies across Europe.

On the national stage, Peter oversaw the implementation of a programme of reform to bring the GOC up to date with best regulatory practice and the principles of the Better Regulation Executive. He successfully carried through initiatives begun by his predecessor, Richard Wilshin, to achieve legislation in 2005 which brought about radical changes. These included a system of statutory Continuing Education and Training for optometrists and dispensing opticians, registration of students, and reform of disciplinary structures in line with current approaches to human rights.

On his forthcoming departure, Peter said: “It’s been a privilege to have been part of the GOC for the past seven and a half years, during a time of fundamental reform both for the optical sector and the world of regulation. It will be a wrench to leave, but I am looking forward to some new and exciting personal challenges.”

Peter intends to continue his involvement in health and regulation, but hopes to finally indulge his passion for the past by studying for an MA in archaeology. Life at the GOC certainly won’t be the same without him.
New course in Germany

The Fachakademie für Augenoptik der Augenoptiker-Innung Hannover, the Augenoptikerschule Hankensbüttel and the Fachhochschule Braunschweig/Wolfenbüttel have joined forces and started in August a new course leading to a Bachelor of Science degree in Augenoptik. The entry requirement is the diploma of Augenoptiker-geselle. However, this apprenticeship before one is admitted to the university differs from that at other universities in that it lasts only one year and is thus 2½ years shorter than usual. The statutory period of study is eight semesters or four years. Altogether it takes five years to be awarded the BSc degree in Augenoptik.

For information see: http://www.fh-wolfenbuettel.de/cms/de/fbg/

Translation of document and article from English into German

The German ECOO member associations have translated two important documents from English into German: the ECOO Position Paper on Contact Lenses and the article on the role of optometrists in glaucoma that was published in the March 21 issue of Optometry Today.

The position paper on contact lenses is now accessible in English on the ECOO website at: http://www.ecoo.info/mm/WEB_001_080515.pdf and in German at: http://www.ecoo.info/mm/WEB_002_080829.pdf

Joachim Goerdt 60 Years

Joachim Goerdt, the director of the German member of ECOO, Zentralverband der Augenoptiker (ZVA), celebrated on 20th August his 60th birthday. This is Jochen’s second important jubilee this year, in January he celebrated his 25-Year Jubilee at ZVA. ECOO congratulates Herr Goerdt on behalf of his many friends in Europe on his birthday and wishes him many more years in good health and harmony!
The Association of Optometrists (AOP) announces that the second edition of The Optometry Red Book is available at a special 50% discount to ECOO members. The Red Book is an essential, non-clinical reference work for UK optometrists, giving an overview of the profession, the organisations that run it and the legal and regulatory framework in which practitioners operate. There has been a great deal of change in the regulation and delivery of optometric services in the UK during recent years. The changes to medicines legislation which enables optometrists to independently prescribe medicines for the treatment of some ocular conditions are a prime example!

This book is a must for all practitioners on the European mainland who observe the developments in the UK with Argus’ eyes. The price (£ 29.50) includes free online access and updates for 2 years.

Order online at www.otbookshop.co.uk or contact Angela Lawrence at angela.lawrence@tenalpspublishing.com

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**Death of Philippe Carlier of Belgium**

Philippe Carlier, president of the Belgian Association of Opticians and Optometrists, died on 29 July at the age of 59. He had been president of the Association since 1984 and had supported the profession by, among other things:

- launching the training of optometrists for three years at the level of post-secondary school
- promoting continuing education and training
- creating the Association’s magazine Optomagazine
- creating the Association’s buying group Optico-op.

At the time of his premature death, several important projects were still in the process of realisation, including the accreditation of training and, perhaps most importantly, the legal recognition of optometry as an independent profession in Belgium.

ECOO has expressed its condolences to our Belgian colleagues.

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**Yigal Gutman receives PCO Award**

Yigal Gutman from Israël is no stranger to members of ECOO, he and his wife Aviva have many friends in Europe. For that reason we want to congratulate Yigal also in this ECOO Newsletter on the award he recently received from the Pennsylvania College of Optometry (PCO). Yigal is a long time delegate to meetings of the World Council of Optometry (WCO) and was for many years its treasurer. He now serves on the Board of Directors of the World Optometry Foundation, the charitable arm of WCO. In between meetings he is the General Director of the Israel College of Optometry in Tel Aviv.

On May 13, Yigal received, during the International Retina Conference in Israel, the 2008 PCO Alumni Association Distinguished Service Award for his singular contributions to the advancement of optometry and optometric education in Israel. The award was presented by Dr Anthony F. Di Stefano, PCO Vice President & Dean of Academic Affairs, at a special reception jointly arranged in Yigal’s honour by the Israel Council of Optometrists, the Israel College of Optometry, and PCO.

Yigal, please accept our congratulations!

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**The Optometry Red Book**

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Executive Director
World Council of Optometry

International Travel  c £60k + benefits

WCO is an international organisation representing 200,000 optometrists from 75 member organizations in 40 countries. Its mission is to facilitate the enhancement and development of eye and vision care worldwide via education, humanitarian outreach and policy development and is the first and only optometric organisation in official relations with the WHO.

An exciting opportunity has arisen for a talented and experienced senior executive to take on the challenging role of Executive Director. This is a varied role that provides autonomy and accountability for the day-to-day operations of the organisation including governance, finance, fundraising and communications. The postholder will have dedicated administrative support and access to the finance and marketing & communication teams at the College of Optometrists, which will be the employing body.

Reporting to the WCO President, the successful candidate will be expected to support the WCO’s multinational Governing Board, and have full responsibility for ensuring that WCO meets its current and future objectives including the recruitment and retention of members, and the development, promotion and delivery of its programmes.

The Role

- Strategic planning.
- Policy development.
- Governance.
- Financial management.
- Fundraising.
- Communications

The Person

- Graduate level qualification
- Experienced senior executive, preferably with experience of a membership environment.
- Effective communicator.
- Financially astute.
- Resilient and adaptable
- Fluent in English – fluency in Spanish would be an advantage

Meetings and conferences are held throughout the world so regular international travel is a requirement of the role. The post will be London-based.

If you are interested in applying for this position, you will find a job description, application form and further details at www.college-optometrists.org. Please send completed application forms to Wingyee Chan, The College of Optometrists, 42 Craven Street, London, WC2N 5NG.

For an informal discussion about the role please contact Bryony Pawinska, Chief Executive, College of Optometrists; tel 020 7766 4341.

Closing date for applications: 10 October 2008.