



Message from the President

Greetings, ECOO members, and welcome to this issue of our ECOO Newsletter.

Dear ECOO members,

For all involved in the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO), their work is rooted in ECOO's decided vision and mission. The ECOO Executive Committee had its first meeting of the year in February, and the previous day involved board members in a very useful workshop aimed at increased board efficiency and effectiveness.

To be able to meet all demands and also to keep track of what's happening not only in each country but also in the European Union institutions, we have evaluated the budget and will present recommendations at our next General Assembly (GA). To be able to fulfil our members' expectations, we need to have some power in the budget. If we are willing to strengthen the profession, we also have to understand that there is not only workload that is needed, but also some money. We are now focusing to publish the Blue Book, have had some work to do with that, and some work still remains to be done. Unfortunately, not all members have updated the data for their countries to the most recent figures, and that impacts the final result.

The work of the European Commission regarding the Mutual Evaluation of Professions has also shown how important it is for ECOO to have its statistical data readily updated. ECOO was even asked by the European Commission to present figures pertaining to optometry and optics in Europe. We would have appreciated to be able to present more data, however we depend on each

member country's will to audit and submit their own statistics. In the end we all gain from being able to present the most accurate and relevant facts and examples of best practices for the profession in each country. Many of you got involved with the Mutual Evaluation of Professions exercise, at European and national level. While it was more difficult in some countries than in others to contribute to the work of the national authorities, we encourage our members in their efforts. The final aim remains patient safety, made possible by efficient record keeping and traceability.

Optometrists and opticians, depending on how our profession is recognised in each country, are a natural part in public health and care. We should not only maintain but also develop our knowledge. One useful tool for that is Continuing Education and Training (CET). One way to disseminate the good examples for CET is to participate in the First World Congress of Optometry in Medellin (Colombia), organised by the World Council of Optometry on 14-16 August 2015.

The ECOO spring meeting in Budapest (Hungary) is approaching and we look forward to welcome all members to our meetings. I am happy to say that we have new organisations that have applied for membership and the General Assembly will cast its vote in this sense. The members strengthen ECOO and we believe in representing as many countries as possible.

Paul Folkesson



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Regulatory Updates

Ongoing actions on Fluorescein and the Mutual Evaluation of Professions

ECOO has been monitoring developments regarding **the classification of Fluorescein** on an ongoing basis. Most recently, the Expert Group's **taskforce** led by Italy and Germany developed a **draft definition of "medical diagnosis"**. After that, Member States and a number of stakeholders, including ECOO, had the opportunity to submit their comments (during the spring of 2014). The definition is meant to bring clarity into the classification matter for a number of visualisation products (including Fluorescein), and the taskforce was meant to revise the definition incorporating the input received.

This work of the taskforce has however been delayed, which is why a decision on Fluorescein has not been taken to date. The meeting of the Borderline and Classification Expert Group, originally planned for October 2014 has been postponed to 2015. The **taskforce is expected to resume work** so that a **second round of discussions on the draft definition** can take place in the near future. The next meeting of the Borderline and Classification Expert Group that may address the issue is provisionally scheduled for **2 June 2015**.

Another regulatory area of focus for us remains the **Mutual Evaluation of Professions**. Many ECOO members were actively involved in the exercise organised by the European Commission in November 2014, and significant efforts were made by members to cooperate with the national coordinators. The Member States are expected to present their national Action Plans in April 2015. ECOO will continue monitoring the developments and provide input where appropriate.

Country News

Optics and optometry in Switzerland

By Christian Stebler, President Swiss Optic Association (SOV)

Switzerland is a rather conservative country. It is said that the Swiss people are honest and hardworking, but often stuck in their traditions and old ways of doing things. However, it is also true that the Swiss are very interested in innovation, scientific knowledge and technical progress as well as in education, training and the transfer of know-how. History proves that Switzerland, with its single raw material of exemplary education, is a leader in many fields. However, when irrevocable change and progress penetrates into their own four walls, many Swiss become pessimistic or even angry. Accepting challenges and grasping new chances is often seen as dangerous and disturbing to the comfortable status quo. This fact

has, especially recently, also affected the fields of optics and optometry in Switzerland.

Today, 3500 professionals in the areas of technical optics and optometry provide the Swiss population of approximately 8 million people with visual aids and optometric services in all quality levels. Industry sales total approximately 1.3 Billion Swiss Francs. There is no other country in Europe with a higher added value for products and services in the optic industry. In the total number of eyeglasses sold, price aggressive chain stores have taken over the lead from the traditionally structured retail industry. In all cantons of Switzerland, optometrists and all industry professionals



with higher education (with one exception) are members of legally regulated health professions. The Federal Bureau of Research, Education and Innovation (SBFI) closely examines the credentials

of foreign educated professionals to ensure their equivalence before granting a professional license to practice in Switzerland. The cantons are responsible for enforcing these regulations and for many years, this has been handled in a very “loose” manner.

The Swiss government has now issued a new Health Profession Law (GesBG). Since it is planned to include optics in this new law, all persons with a professional license to practice must now be registered in the new National Register for Health Professions (NAREG).

The Swiss Optic Association (SOV) and the Swiss Professional Association for Ophthalmic Optics and Optometry (SBAO) welcome these legislative and regulatory measures for greater quality assurance in the interest of patient safety.

Update from the Academy

Budapest 2015 – book your hotel and CooperVision/Sauflon tour

There is still time to book your ticket to Budapest 2015, the European Academy of Optometry and Optics’ seventh annual conference. We have negotiated discounts at a range of local hotels for delegates. Please note, the distance of these hotels from the Budapest 2015 conference venue may vary. Prices start at €70 for a single occupancy room. The latest Budapest 2015 programme can be found on the conference website. Our three day conference features over 32 inspiring conference sessions, as well

as two fantastic keynote lectures, 12 clinical workshops and over 50 poster presentations. Alongside a busy conference schedule delegates can opt to visit the CooperVision/Sauflon state of the art contact lens manufacturing facility. You will see first-hand contact lens production and explore the architecturally acclaimed Centre of Innovation. The visit is free of charge and transport will be provided but you must book your place.

President of EAoo, Professor Paul Murphy, said: “Our conference programme consists of exciting and innovative sessions and workshops focused on providing valuable professional development opportunities. Delegates will benefit from world class speakers presenting their latest findings and this year we have incorporated visits to local facilities to create even more opportunities for delegates and members to expand their professional networks.”

Calling all educators

At the same time as Budapest 2015, the Academy is hosting a unique two hour, education meeting for university lecturers, researchers and staff to discuss the key issues faced by universities within optical and optometric education. A series of presentations and discussions will focus on the challenges faced, possible solutions and best practice. This meeting is free to attend but you must email admin@eaoo.info to confirm your place. The conference offers other education sessions including ‘Using a VLE for formative assessment in an optometry programme’ and ‘Difficulties in teaching optometry in Bulgaria’, as well

as a session on the ECOO European Diploma in Optometry and its relevance to the development of optometric education and the scope-of-practice in Europe. Visit www.budapest2015.info to book your conference ticket, the CooperVision/Sauflon tour, for a full list of workshops and for more information on accommodation options.



European Academy
of Optometry and Optics



Technical Update

OCT, case finding & optometric practice

By Martin O'Brien, FCOptom, Ireland

Optical coherence tomography (OCT) is a non-invasive imaging test that uses light waves to take cross-section pictures of the retina, and other ocular structures. With OCT, each of the retina's distinctive layers can be seen, allowing the examiner to map and measure their thickness. These measurements help with early detection, diagnosis and treatment for retinal diseases and conditions, including age-related macular degeneration, diabetic eye disease and glaucoma.

Case finding in healthcare is a strategy used to identify previously undiagnosed conditions or disease in individuals presenting for an eye examination; this can include individuals with pre-symptomatic or unrecognised symptomatic disease. Case finding involves identifying people at risk based on the factors, such as age, family history or other possible co-morbidity. Case finding interventions are designed to detect abnormalities which are then referred to ophthalmologists. An eye-examination is the most common case finding intervention for the identification of eye conditions and disease. **The examination of the fundus (or back of the eye) is a core competency of the optometrist,** and is carried out as standard, during the eye-examination procedure. The most common method used is ophthalmoscopy; whereby the examiner uses an instrument and visible light to examine ocular structures. The introduction of Fundus Photography allowed for an image of the fundus to be generated to be stored and reviewed, with modern technology, the majority of fundus photographs use digital imaging and storage techniques.

Many population-based screening programs, particularly for Diabetic Retinopathy as in the UK & Ireland, use digital fundus photography as the basis of the screening program. However, it is important to note that in both ophthalmoscopy and fundus photography, only a 2 dimensional view of the retina is possible. This makes it extremely difficult to correctly assess where swelling or oedema is present- which can lead to false-positive and false-negative screening results.

The technology used in OCT examination offers the examiner a different perspective when visualising the retina. In essence the OCT provides a 3-D image of ocular structures, thereby making it invaluable in the proper identification of conditions where there may be swelling, oedema or other damage in the retina. Early identification and therefore early treatment is vital to avoid preventable sight loss.

Case finding by optometrists plays a significant role in the healthcare pathway ensuring that patients are directed to secondary and tertiary medical care in an appropriate and rapid fashion. OCT imaging used in optometric practice is an extremely useful tool in case finding for a variety of ocular conditions, where other examination and imaging techniques may be inadequate. Case finding by definition, does not constitute making a diagnosis; simply the identification of clinically significant ocular findings. **The use of OCT as a referral refinement tool can significantly reduce the incidence of both false positive and false negative results.**



Whether an optometrist makes a diagnosis based on an OCT scan or refers for medical diagnosis and or treatment is a matter for protocols to be agreed based on relevant national Statutes.

Update from the World Council of Optometry

WCO launches a global platform for eye health care

As part of its commitment to quality eye health and vision care accessible to all and facilitating the development of optometry around the world, the WCO has developed The 1st World Congress of Optometry. Organised in partnership with the Colombian Federation of Optometrists (FEDOPTO), this is the first global event to encompass all aspects of optometry in order to share knowledge, explore clinical and technological innovation and establish an agreed holistic policy for the sector and for the future of accessible eye health care. The Congress will bring together educators, practitioners, leaders from optometric associations and representatives from the optical industry to discuss optometric education and practice across the world and help shape the future of the profession.

The three day itinerary is designed to appeal to all delegates. There are two parallel programmes: - a scientific programme with lectures and workshops on 17 topics, which will support delegates' continuing education through COPE and CET accreditation, and an educators' programme, which focuses on six key areas of optometric education. Lectures and seminars will be presented by leading experts from across the globe including Prof Brien Holden, Prof Thomas Freddo and Drs Randall Thomas and Ron Melton. The Congress will also offer an exhibition of clinical videos and photographs, a public outreach programme and a trade exhibition with more than 40 international and national exhibitors.

Susan Cooper, WCO President says: 'The significant and increasingly recognised role of optometrists as the first point of contact for primary eye care and in



the reduction of blindness and visual impairment needs to be supported at all levels. The biennial World Congress of Optometry is the ideal platform to evaluate our progress in achieving this goal for developing the collaborations needed to make positive progress. It is the essential event for anyone working in this area interested in playing a role in the future provision of high quality accessible vision and eye health care for all.'

Jose Manuel Gomez, Director of FEDOPTO, says: 'We are delighted to take a leading role in hosting this ground-breaking event. The Congress

will not only strengthen the presence of optometry globally, it will also enable us to raise awareness of, and leverage support for, optometry across Latin America and the Caribbean. We are very optimistic about the lasting and positive legacy the Congress will leave for the region.'

The 1st World Congress of Optometry takes place **14 – 16 August 2015 in Medellín, Colombia** and is the first of an ongoing series of biennial global conferences to be held in different regions across the five continents. Registration is open and further information is available at www.worldcongressofoptometry.org



ECOO upcoming meeting

**General Assembly in Budapest (Hungary),
14-17 May 2015**

The ECOO Spring 2015 General Assembly will take place together with the European Academy of Optometry and Optics annual conference on **14-17 May 2015** in Budapest, Hungary. The event is being organised by the European Academy for Optometry and Optics (EAOO) with the support of the Hungarian Craft Union of Private Opticians. Registrations are open and information on the meetings including the schedule and logistics are available on the ECOO website.



Save the date

ECOO Autumn 2015, Brussels (Belgium)

The ECOO Autumn meeting 2015 will take place on **16-18 October 2015** in Brussels, Belgium. More information will follow soon. Please mark your calendars accordingly.



Newsletter

The Newsletters are sent to ECOO's members and contacts via e-mail. Please inform us of any additions to the mailing list or of staff changes in your respective organisations. Should you have any news or updates which may be of interest

to ECOO members, please contact Fabienne Eckert at the ECOOSecretariat:

E-mail: secretariat@ecoo.info

Telephone: +32 (0)2 739 16 15

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