
Position Paper

Digital Imaging- An optometry perspective

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The examination of the internal and external structures of the eye is a core competency of the optometrist. There are a variety of different methods available to the modern eye care professional in order to carry out such an examination. Traditionally, the internal structure of the eye has been examined through the use of direct and indirect ophthalmoscopy and the details and health implications of the observations are written in the patient record, sometimes accompanied by hand drawn diagrams.

Recently, a number of new instruments capable of examining both the internal and external eye have become available, among which are Digital Fundus Photography, Ocular Coherence Tomography (OCT), Corneal Topography, laser polarimetry, wide-field scanning laser ophthalmoscopy etc.

With the increased use of these instruments there has been debate about the correct use of digital imaging as part of the patient record. A good quality digital image provides an objective record of the specific structures of the eye at the time of examination. It has been suggested that the inclusion of a copy of the image in the patient record, in itself, satisfies the professional obligation to carry out an examination, with the implication that there is no necessity to add description and analysis of the critical features of the image and its health implications.

ECOO Position:

- When carrying out an eye-examination, it is the responsibility of an optometrist to carry out a comprehensive internal and external examination of the eyes using appropriate range of techniques.
- All significant findings delivered from digital and non-digital techniques should be recorded and their implications clearly stated.
- At present digital technology is not universally available nor appropriate for all patients. The techniques of direct & Volk lens indirect ophthalmoscopy, headset BIO and slit-lamp biomicroscopy continue to be key competencies of the European Diploma that optometrists should carry out, along with and supplemented by, the more recent technologies and imaging techniques.

About ECOO:

The European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) is the European organisation which represents the interests of optometrists and opticians from 25 countries. It aims to promote eye health to the public across borders and to harmonise clinical and educational standards of optometric and optical practice throughout Europe.

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