



Irish College of
Ophthalmologists
Eye Doctors of Ireland
Protecting your Vision

Newsletter

ISSUE 9

AUGUST 2014

Message from the President



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to this edition of the newsletter. It was wonderful to see so many of you earlier this summer at the Annual Meeting in Limerick and I hope you enjoy the reports and pictures from the conference highlighted throughout the edition.

As we enter the final quarter of 2014, it is extremely encouraging to see the continued successful roll out of the national diabetic retinopathy screening programme in clinics throughout the country and the publicity in regional and national press to raise public awareness of the programme. Our own clinic in University Hospital Limerick was opened in early August and I am delighted to see good uptake of the service.

The Annual AMD Awareness Week will once again take place this year from the 15th – 21st September. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our members who have in previous years agreed to see patients referred on from the nationwide mobile testing units and would ask members who are happy to do so for this year's campaign to contact the College.

I would also like to thank members who have taken the time to complete the RCPI Doctors Wellness Survey and encourage those of you who may not have had the opportunity to date to please do so. It is of great importance that we recognise the daily stresses and strains doctors may experience in their working lives and work towards offering better support and highlighting these concerns in order to address the issue.

With best wishes
MARIE HICKEY DWYER

Medical Advertising Meeting

The ICO will hold a meeting on Wednesday September 24th at the RCSI to facilitate a review of the current regulation of medical and surgical advertising in Ireland. Discussion of the issues around the advertising of medical and surgical procedures is an important one and the ICO is very keen to facilitate the debate. The College is liaising with colleagues in the specialties of Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery and Dermatology together with the regulatory and consumer bodies to ensure that the speakers cover the broad range of considerations intrinsic to the debate.

The appropriateness of some advertising of procedures is questionable and while there is little doubt that a medical or cosmetic procedure can be positive for patients when undertaken by trained specialists with appropriate aftercare and that medical advertising can help to inform patients of services and options available, without appropriate regulation advertising may result in a patient making a poorly informed decision.

Currently in Ireland there is no specific legislation with regard to medical advertising. Issues of concern include pressurised and inappropriate sales techniques, such as the use of financial inducements and time limited deals to promote interventions, celebrity endorsements or surgery being offered as a raffle prize. The lack of specific regulation concerning non-resident surgeons and instances where pre-operative consultations are undertaken by non-doctors will all be considered in order to examine the potential for

inappropriate influencing of vulnerable consumers.

The discussions at the meeting on September 24 will focus on whether tighter guidelines and possible legislation are required to safeguard patients and their ability to make fully informed decisions before undertaking a medical or surgical procedure.

There has been considerable health media reaction and articles to reflect the announcement by the ICO to facilitate a meeting to discuss this issue. Health writer with the Medical Independent, Catherine Reilly, has recently written a comprehensive and well researched series of articles on the subject in the paper.

In addition to the key stakeholders, the ICO has notified and invited all members of Dail Eireann to the meeting. The feedback to date has been very positive in terms of welcoming the fact that the ICO has initiated proceedings to discuss the subject.

A written discussion document will be drafted and circulated to all our members and to all invited stakeholders in advance of the meeting and feedback from parties will be encouraged.

Feedback from medical professionals and key stakeholders in attendance will be instrumental in shaping the recommended guidelines on medical advertising, which we will call on the Government to endorse and to also work towards enacting appropriate legislation.

We look forward to keeping in touch with our members on the meeting and if you wish to discuss further, please contact Siobhan Kelly at the ICO office.



Published by
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If you would like to make any suggestions for future issues of the College Newsletter please contact
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Eye Am What I Eat

The Irish College of Ophthalmologists, along with Diabetes Ireland and key vision health stakeholders, was delighted to support the *Eye Am What I Eat* campaign, this year's creative initiative to help increase the public's awareness and understanding of diabetic retinopathy and diabetic macular oedema.



Pictured at the launch of the 'Eye Am What I Eat' campaign were l-r Siobhan Kelly, RTE's Ronan Collins, Sinead Hanley, Diabetes Ireland Dietitian and Medley Chef Andrew Rudd.



Siobhan Kelly, Sinead Hanley, Diabetes Ireland, Loretta Callaghan, Novartis, Winner Evelyn Cullen, Chef Andrew Rudd, RTE presenter Ronan Collins and Anna Moran, Fighting Blindness.

The campaign aimed to help people understand the link between a healthy diet and good eye health.

Celebrity chef, Andrew Rudd joined forces with the ICO, Diabetes Ireland, NCBI, Fighting Blindness, the AOI and Novartis to launch the **Eye Am What I Eat** campaign in May, inviting people to develop a recipe for eye health using one or more of the "Top 10 Foods for Eye Health" listed at www.eyeamwhatleat.ie

The four finalists selected attended an event hosted by RTE radio and TV personality Ronan Collins at Andrew Rudd's venue 'Medley' in Dublin City on July 23rd where their recipes were prepared and sampled by the audience. The overall winner was Evelyn Cullen.

During the campaign eye doctors Susan Kelly, David Keegan, Mark Cahill and Micheal O'Rourke were interviewed by various national and regional newspapers and broadcast media to talk about diabetic eye disease and the measures people with diabetes can take to help look after their eye health. The importance of early detection and the roll out of the national diabetic retinopathy screening programme were also highlighted during the campaign.

The interviews are available to watch / listen on eyedoctors.ie.



Micheal O'Rourke with RTE's Ronan Collins at the Eye Am What I Eat Competition Finalists event in Medley, Dublin.

A DAY IN THE LIFE...

In the first of our series of 'A Day in the Life' of an eye doctor, Community Ophthalmic Physician, Dr Alison Blake gives an insight into a typical working day and her role at her clinic in Cavan Hospital and Virginia Health Clinic, and also her work at The Mater Hospital.

I'm usually up by seven thirty. I tried starting public clinics early but patients with the first appointments of the day were always late, "couldn't get children out or granny was slow getting going" so 9.30am is the usual start time.

Mondays I'm in Cavan at the hospital. The clinic is in the Hospital but is a community clinic. The advantages are access to radiology and pathology, camaraderie with colleagues in other specialties and situation in the outpatients as we do not have a dedicated nurse. That location is also a disadvantage as there is always lack of space in the Hospital.

Children usually get the early appointments. I work alongside Sheila Callanan, Orthoptist, which is a huge advantage and children are generally more attentive in the morning. Sheila also sees adult Diplopia cases and does visual fields on a Humphrey Visual Field Analyser. There are a huge variety of patients in every clinic. Seeing children is very satisfying. Most do well, parents are motivated, and rapport improves with time. When I see them every visit I get to know them well, they grow up fast!

Paperwork and emails are a pain!

Everyone seems to think everyone needs to know everything so the email list gets longer daily. Referrals are generally paper, letters and forms. Quality varies, but many preschool children are referred too young with family history only, and trying to prioritise with minimal relevant information can be frustrating. I take half an hour for lunch and try to get paperwork done at that time. Letters are easier when done as I go, but often have to wait for the end of the day. In Croke Park last year Prof David Taylor suggested doing letter in front of patient, I haven't managed it yet.

I work in the Mater with Ms Pat Logan, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon. The regional unit time is precious. The first week of the month is a subspecialty neuro clinic. The ongoing true CME is beyond price. Patients I have referred get added value as I can track and expedite their progress better on site if necessary.

I do a clinic in Virginia Health Clinic weekly also. Patients love coming there. Some like that it is not a hospital, most like that it is closer to home, it is a new building, parking is easier and for many it is where they attend their GP. For me, it is closer to home also so win win for all!



Alison Blake (centre) pictured at the launch of the ICO's 'Your Sight, Our Vision' eye health information booklet at last year's conference in Killarney.

National Study of Wellbeing

A national study to explore workplace stressors and measure stress related ill-health among hospital doctors in Ireland is being carried out in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland. This is an important study at a time when recruitment and retention of doctors in the Irish health system is extremely challenging. It is being carried out by Dr Blánaid Hayes, RCPI National Specialty Director in Occupational Medicine.

There has been a dearth of research into the health and well-being of doctors in this country, despite an expanding amount of literature into the problem of sick doctors, including the challenges posed by stress, mental ill health and addiction.

There are many reasons why one might expect that doctors in Ireland experience stress in their working lives. The changing structures of the national health service, as well as new organisational structures (e.g. the directorate model) have had an impact on how people work. The financial and personnel constraints imposed by recession translate into greater work volume, tighter deadlines and dissatisfaction of service users. All of this is stressful for those working to provide care.

In spring/summer 2014, email and postal surveys were circulated to more than 3,000 doctors in Anaesthesia, Emergency Medicine, all medical specialties, Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Paediatrics, Surgery, Pathology, Psychiatry and Ophthalmology. To date the response rate is over 55% and the RCPI believe this high response rate will produce very robust findings allowing for the research to inform future interventions for maintaining mental health and accessing preferred care. Responses will continue to be accepted until August 10th and we would encourage anyone who has not already taken part to consider doing so as a higher response rate will maximise statistical significance and enhance the validity of the results.

The RCPI wish to express their sincere thanks to all those who have already taken the time to take part. If you have any questions or would like any further information about the study please contact the RCPI at wellbeing@rcpi.ie.

Vision Coalition



CEO Siobhan Kelly is pictured outside Leinster House with the National Vision Coalition representatives ahead of the Seanad Debate on July 16th.

There have been two significant events for the Vision Coalition since the launch of the report on the Economic Cost of the Burden of Eye Disease and Preventable Blindness in April: a hearing before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children and a Seanad Debate supporting the call for a National Vision Strategy.

At the Coalition event in April, Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor and Senator Martin Conway committed to supporting the Vision Coalition in achieving its aims of a national vision strategy. The focus of the strategy is on prevention and early intervention, the co-ordination and integration of services, knowledge and awareness among health professionals and the general public, research to promote healthy vision, elimination of avoidable sight loss and to improve the quality of care which ensures that those affected are engaged in the design and delivery of support services.

Joint Oireachtas Committee Hearing

On Thursday July 3rd Coalition Members appeared before the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children to present information on the Cost of Blindness. The session was convened at the request of Deputy Mitchell O'Connor to discuss the costs and other issues around blindness in Ireland. The meeting gave Members an

opportunity to consider the work of the National Vision Coalition and to consider the cost to the State of vision impairment and the saving that could be made from early intervention.

Senators and TDs heard how one in 20 people in Ireland is affected by one of the four main eye diseases, cataract, age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy. This rises to more than one in two people over the age of 80. Each individual eye disease leads to a significant reduction in well-being, which is equivalent to more than 700,000 work days or 2.1 million healthy days lost per annum in Ireland. The financial cost to the State also is considerable. Based on the report, the financial cost to the State in 2010 was €386 million and on current trends, that will rise to more than €449 million by 2020. These costs are manifest in the Department of Social Protection through increased welfare payments and fewer people in the workforce, in the Department of Finance through a reduced tax take and the deadweight loss incurred by transferring moneys from the tax take to the welfare side and of course are felt in the Department of Health through supports and interventions for patients affected by blindness and vision impairment. People with vision loss and blindness are eight times more likely to fracture a hip, three times more likely to suffer from depression and admission to nursing homes on average takes place

up to three years earlier than in the case of those without vision impairment. Moreover, the costs to the State rise significantly from €1,700 per annum up to €21,000 per annum if a person slips from visually impairment to blindness.

David Keegan outlined how evidence of the benefits of introducing a strategy on health has already been felt in Ireland. The cancer strategy of 2006 has led to improved patient survival rates for cancer and improved patient care. Crucially, Ireland also is delivering globally relevant groundbreaking research in this field. The National Vision Coalition believes this can be reproduced in respect of blindness. The evidence for vision strategies also is available from Denmark and Scotland, with reductions of 50% in blindness rates due to macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy identified in those countries.

The Committee members committed to support the work of the Coalition and agreed that Chairman Jerry Buttimer TD would write to the Department of Health to support the call for a national strategy.

Seanad Debate

On Wednesday July 16 Senators led by Senator Martin Conway debated a motion calling on the Minister for Health to act upon the recommendations of the National Vision Coalition for a national vision strategy and to implement cost-effective measures to prevent a further 260 people per year becoming blind in Ireland.

The debate was attended by newly appointed Minister for Health Leo Varadkar and in a show of cross party support Senators endorsed the motion which recognised the objectives of Vision 2020 led by the World Health Organisation to eliminate avoidable blindness by 2020.

Members from all parties and independents spoke to support the motion including Senators Martin Conway, Marc McSharry, Mary Moran, Fergal Quinn, Colm Burke (Fine Gael spokesperson on health in the Seanad), David Cullinane, Michael Mullins and John Crowne.

In his response Minister Varadkar cautioned that he would not likely be able to solve all of the problems in the health service in the next 18 months but indicated where his own priorities would lie. He plans to put in place a realistic budget for 2015, and to making real progress in providing universal primary care, something to which he is



Coalition representatives pictured on July 3rd with Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children Committee Chairman, Deputy Jerry Buttiner and Deputy Mary Mitchell O'Connor following the Coalitions presentation on a National Strategy for Vision Health to the Committee.

very committed to as a former GP. He will be aiming at reducing the cost of medicines not only for the Government but for people when they go to their pharmacy, and to also making careers attractive again in the health service, particularly, but not only, for doctors. The Minister stated that he also plans to take a personal lead on issues around health promotion and the prevention of disease. He re-iterated the Government's commitment to the provision of effective and responsive public services for people with visual impairment. It is also firmly committed to the prevention of blindness. He said that the Government is addressing these objectives through overall population health actions and measures specifically targeted at eye health.

He reminded Senators that the core aim of the health service is to maximise the health status of people and to allow them to participate as fully as possible in the social and economic life of the community. The key elements in achieving this are the maintenance of eye health, the prevention of eye disease, early diagnosis of illness and availability of appropriate clinical interventions and supports.

In March 2013 the Government launched Healthy Ireland: A Framework for Improved Health and Wellbeing 2013-2025. This provides a framework for action to improve the health and well-being of our population over the coming generation, through a greater emphasis on prevention, early intervention and keeping individuals and communities well. The whole-of-Government and whole-of-society approach of Healthy Ireland recognises that often the risk factors for chronic diseases are outside the control of the health sector. Broader societal health determinants such as education, employment and the environment influence the distribution of such risk factors in a population and the Minister underlined that we must never forget the importance of taking personal responsibility for our own health.

Minister Varadkar acknowledged the work of the Coalition and the National Clinical programme for Ophthalmology and welcomed the recent announcement of a joint review group between the Programme and the HSE Primary Care Division to review the current provision of services. Paul Moriarty and Siobhan Kelly have been invited to join this review group.

Bayer Retinal Summit 2014

Speakers at the two day event included Dr. Lawrence A Yannuzzi MD, Vitreous-Retina-Macula Consultants of New York, USA, Prof Andrew Lotery, Professor of Ophthalmology, University Hospital Southampton, UK. The meetings were chaired by ICO members Robert Acheson and David Keegan.



K. Ravi Kumar, Paul Connell and Louise O'Toole pictured at the Bayer Retinal Summit 2014, held at the Royal College of Surgeons.



Patrick Hayes and Philip Cleary pictured at the Bayer Retinal Summit 2014, held at the Royal College of Surgeons



Neil O'Connor, David Keegan and Lawrence Yannuzzi pictured at the Bayer Retinal Summit 2014, held at the Royal College of Surgeons.



Board and Honorary members attending the SE2014 Board meeting in Lisbon, Portugal.

BACK ROW: L-R Alistair Fielder, UK, Toscho Voychev-Mitov, Bulgaria, Wagih Aclimandos, UK, Mervat Mourad, Egypt, Elias Feretis, Greece, Sanja Borovic, Montenegro, Jan Ulrik Prause, Denmark, Bo Philipson, Sweden, Hannu Uusitalo, Finland, Andreas Wedrich, Austria, Fridbert Jonasson, Iceland, Veiko Reigo, Estonia, Pavel Rozsival, Czech Republic, Philippe Kestelyn, Belgium, Ivan Stefanovic, Serbia, Gabriel van Rij, The Netherlands, Berati Hasanreisoglu, Turkey, Andrew Scott, SOE YO's.

FRONT ROW: L-R Guna Laganovska, Latvia, Patrica Logan, Ireland, Thomas Fenech, Malta, Stefan Seregard, Sweden, Jan Tjeerd de Faber, The Netherlands, Bente Haughom, Norway, Maria Manuela Carmona, Portugal, Marko Hawlina, Slovenia

Patricia Logan has taken on the role of Irish Representative on the board of the European Society of Ophthalmology (SOE) which is made up of 40 national member societies in Europe including associate societies in Egypt, Israel and Jordan. Pat attended her first board meeting at the SOE's General Assembly in Lisbon in June. The meeting was very well attended by other European representative members and Pat was very warmly received as the Irish representative.

Stefan Seregard, Professor of Ophthalmology at the Department of Clinical Neuroscience Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden is Secretary General and current President of the SOE.

The organisation holds a biennial Scientific Congress, which took place in Copenhagen in 2013 and is due to be hosted in Vienna from the 6-9 June 2015. A very comprehensive scientific programme including courses and wet labs will take place over the 3 day event. The programme is available to view on the SOE's website www.soevision.org.

In addition to organising the SOE Scientific Congress, the SOE plays an essential role in the communication and exchange of expertise and information amongst the European ophthalmic community, specifically the training and research aspects. Pat believes the organisation is an excellent networking facilitator for ophthalmologists, where strong connections among the ophthalmic community are available to be made. The society awards a large number of educational grants to Ophthalmologists and teachers for training at centres throughout Europe.

The SOE also organises a special two

year leadership development programme (EuLDP) to prepare the next generation of leaders in European Ophthalmology.

SOE also sponsors lectures for clinicians and scientists across Europe and has recently set up a group for SOE Young Ophthalmologists (YOs).

The Society sponsors an annual 'SOE Lecture' and the College is working with the SOE to advance this opportunity for Irish

Ophthalmologists. The named lecture is delivered by the Member States most promising young Clinician or Researcher under the age of 45 who is awarded a diploma along with a voucher entitling them to complimentary registration at the next Congress.

Further to her attendance at the June annual meeting, Pat was particularly impressed by the society's new YO programme. The first YO Conference, chaired by Andrew Scott, SPR at Moorfields Hospital, took place in Portugal in July. Pat encourages all ICO trainees and young eye doctors to familiarise themselves and become active within this European group in order to share expertise and experiences. The programme welcomes contributions from YOs (such as observership or fellowship reports) and more detail about the group and the SOE can be found on the SOE website.

Max Treacy will act as the Irish representative to the YO group and Max will keep his fellow ICO trainees and the College informed on the groups developments.

Pat is delighted to be representing the ICO on the board and is looking forward to updating the College on the latest news and activities on behalf of the European society. The board meets annually in June.



Teaching in a Clinical Setting

Do you teach in a clinical setting?

Although much of the teaching of health professionals takes place in clinical settings, few clinicians receive formal training in educational techniques or principles of adult learning.

If you would be interested in further developing your teaching skills, there is the option to take an online distance learning course in Clinical Education.

Courses offered include:

Masters, Diploma and Certificate options as well as a short 6-week module in clinical teaching methods.

Options are designed to be flexible enough for people working full time, and there is a particular focus on helping individuals to apply new educational knowledge to your own workplace context.

Topics covered in the curriculum include:

- Teaching small and large groups;
- Giving constructive feedback;
- Using questions appropriately;
- Assessment design and implementation;
- Individual and group supervision techniques;
- Self-evaluation and professional development.

More information on courses are available at:

www.nuigalway.ie/courses/taught-postgraduate-courses/clinical-education.html

or contact

mary.byrne@nuigalway.ie
or 091-495205:

CORU – The Health & Social Care Professionals Council

What is CORU?

CORU is the umbrella body name adopted to describe the Health and Social Care Professionals Council and the Registration Boards of the 13 professions, designated under the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 for statutory registration.

The multi-profession health regulator was established to protect the public by promoting high standards of professional conduct and professional education, training and on-going competence through statutory registration of health and social care professionals (AHP's). CORU will be responsible for the registration of approximately 18,000 – 20,000 professionals when all registers are open, at which time the public will be able to check if a health or social care professional is registered. Currently the public have a limited recourse should the provision of services by any of these professions not be up to standard.

To regulate the 13 professions, CORU's role is to set the standards that AHP's must reach, ensuring that the relevant educational bodies deliver qualifications that prepare professionals to provide safe and appropriate care. In order to do this, CORU are setting certain standards which the designated health and social care professional will agree to in order to be able to practice in Ireland. Once the register is fully established for a profession, only registered professional may use the protected professional title.

CORU will maintain and publish a register of health and social care professionals who meet the standards, and ensure that registered AHP's continue professional development.



Ginny Hanrahan, CEO Coru

Interim Optical Registration Board

Former Minister for Health Dr James Reilly TD appointed the Interim Optical Registration Board on 9th April 2014. The role of the Interim Optical Registration Board is to prepare in advance of the establishment of the statutory Optical Registration Board. This will include drafting bye-laws, drafting a code of professional conduct and ethics and assisting with preparations for transition.

Patricia Logan and Martin Coyne were appointed to the Interim Board, which will run alongside the existing Opticians' Board for the rest of this year after which time the Opticians' Board will be subsumed into the CORU Optical Registration Board. Pat and Martin's role on the board is to represent the interests of the public and patient safety. The Board is regulating both dispensing opticians and optometrists.

The first Board meeting was held in May and a meeting is scheduled monthly. Pat reports that the board is well organised under the guidance of CEO Ginny Hanrahan, who has done significant preparatory work, applicable to all the Allied Health Professions under CORU's remit. CORU is the first



Ag Rialáil Gairmithe Sláinte agus Cúraim Shóisialaigh
Regulating Health +
Social Care Professionals

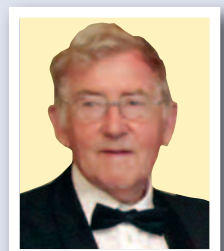
regulator to be established with a lay majority provision on the Council and the Registration Boards. This is to provide for a greater involvement of the public in the governance of statutory regulation. The aim is to give the public confidence and give the registrants recognition for the high standards they conform to, while dealing with those practitioners who do not reach or attain these standards.

Mr Peter McGrath of Specsavers on O'Connell Street was elected as chairperson of the interim board at the group's meeting in May.

July's meeting takes place on the 28th July and the College will keep members informed of updates.

Peter Eustace

The College members learned of the death of Prof Peter Eustace on April 11th with great sadness. Peter was President of the College from 1993-95.



He made a great contribution to Irish ophthalmology throughout his distinguished career and he will be sorely missed.

Our sincere condolences to Margaret, his children, children in law, grandchildren and the extended family.

ICO Conference

The College is delighted to look back on what was a very well attended and received Annual Meeting in Limerick. ICO President Marie Hickey Dwyer was particularly delighted to welcome all the members and trainees to Limerick and thanks all those who presented and participated in the comprehensive programme of symposia and presentations over the three days.

A special thanks to our distinguished guest speakers at this year's meeting. Prof Jim Lucey, Medical Director of St. Patricks University Hospital gave a memorable and thought provoking talk on the importance of medical professionals taking care of their mental health and left a lasting impression by concluding his talk with the ever optimistic tune 'Happy' and the memorable sight of twirling Madame President across the stage!

The College was honoured to welcome Prof Stephen Foster, Clinical Professor of Ophthalmology at Harvard Medical School to the meeting. Prof Foster gave this year's

Annual Mooney lecture entitled 'MERSI Guidelines for a Preferred Practice Pattern for the Care of Patients with Recurrent or Steroid-Dependent Uveitis'. The presentation was an invaluable insight into his expert views on evidence-based current best practices and preferred practice patterns of caring for patients who have recurrent or steroid-dependent uveitis.

Prof Susan Kennedy, Consultant Pathologist and Dr Susan Knowles, Consultant Microbiologist, at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, presented during the Ocular Infections Symposium making very interesting contributions to this year's meeting.



Marie Hickey Dwyer with Prof Jim Lucey

Public Eye Health Information Session

Following a successful inaugural eye health information meeting at last year's conference in Kerry, the College was very pleased to see an equally strong interest from the Limerick community in attending a meeting on the subject. Thank you to Alison Blake, Garry Treacy and Patricia

Quinlan, for once again giving their time in preparing and presenting at this year's event.

Marie Hickey Dwyer welcomed all to the session and reiterated the ICO's commitment to patient safety and educating the public on best eye health practices.



Garry Treacy, Marie Hickey Dwyer, Patricia Quinlan and Alison Blake, pictured at the ICO Public Eye Health Information Event in Limerick.



Claire Harnett, Lina Kobayter and Maria Meehan, Fighting Blindness, pictured at the ICO Public Eye Health Information Event in Limerick.

GP Education Evening

The attendance of over half of all GP's in the Limerick area was a testament to the preparation and planning which went into this year's GP Education Session at the conference. The ICO is committed to continuing to strengthen relations with GP's and ensuring there are improved lines of communication between our medical organisations in light of the essential primary eye care role GP's undertake. The event aims to foster a greater understanding of the roles and responsibilities of community and

hospital based eye doctors and referral pathways.

Philip O'Reilly, Jeremy O'Connor and Catherine McCrann presented on the common eye conditions GPs see in their practices and advised which conditions can be treated or managed directly and those which need to be referred on to an eye doctor for specialist care.

Marie Hickey-Dwyer welcomed her medical colleagues from the region and talked about the retinal conditions.

GP Survey

A follow up survey to gather feedback from GP's in attendance was circulated by the College post event. The information will provide the ICO with a greater insight into the GP's primary eye care role.

The College plans to extend the reach of this survey and circulate to GP's nationwide. The research is part of the ICO's strategy to ensure a focus on eye health. The College is committed to working with GPs to tackle the growing impact of vision impairment and the increase in adverse lifestyle factors contributing to the onset of eye complications.



Marie Hickey Dwyer, Phillip O'Reilly, Catherine McCrann and Jeremy O'Connor, pictured at the Eye Health Education Session for General Practitioners at the ICO Conference in Limerick.



Christine Richardson, Childvision pictured with Lean Kennedy and Aoife Josh, Irish Guide Dogs with guide dog Roy at the Eye Health Education Session for General Practitioners at the ICO Conference in Limerick.



Dr. John Waters, Limerick and Dr. Mary Crowley, Limerick pictured at the ICO GP Education Event.



Dr. Rachel Finnegan, Ballingarry and Dr. Leandre Powys, Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick pictured at the ICO GP Education Event.



Dr. Pat O'Dwyer, Co. Limerick, and Dr. Paul Kieran, Newcastlewest, Limerick pictured at the ICO GP Education Event.



Garry Treacy and Catherine McCrann.



Prof Stephen Foster, Frances Foster and Martin O'Connor.



Paul Connell, Evelyn O'Neill and Ian Flitcroft.



Sara McNally, Emily Hughes, Aoife Naughton and Debbie Wallace.



Marie Hickey Dwyer, Gerald Gleeson and Denise Curtin.



Mary Jo Ryan, Alison Blake and Grace O'Malley.

GALA DINNER



Nikola Brummel Murphy, Frank Phelan, Susan Kelly, Muirin Tempany and Ursula Behan.



Siobhan Kelly and Dharm Pandeya.



Richard Comer, Behrooz Golchin and David Wallace.



Carol Gallagher, Fiona Harney and Patricia Logan.



Peter McManus, with Sheila and Pat Hayes.



Estera Igras, Princeton Lee, Deepti Thacoor and Elizabeth McElnea.

NCBI's New Smartphone App Depicts Life Through Eyes of People with AMD

NCBI, has launched a new smartphone app – AMD Aware – supported by Bayer, which aims to bring home the stark reality of life for a person with the eye condition AMD. There are approximately 22,000 people in Ireland living with sight loss as a result of AMD, with numbers expected to rise by more than 45 per cent by the year 2020.

With AMD Aware, the user can at the touch of a button view for themselves what the world is like as seen through the eyes of someone with AMD which, at its most serious, results in a blank patch appearing in the centre of a person's vision. The app is available free of charge for download from the Apple app store by simply searching for "AMD Aware".

Apart from simulating the condition, the app provides information on what AMD is, its

causes, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment.

Supporting the launch of the AMD Aware App, ICO member David Keegan relayed the message to the public that everyone should have their eyes tested every two years:

"AMD affects more than 22,000 people currently in Ireland and is the leading cause of blindness in those aged 50 years and above. We know that early diagnosis is vital so that effective treatment can be provided quickly and every effort made to prevent permanent sight loss. That's why people over 50, whether they wear glasses or not, should have regular checks with their eye doctor. This really is the best way to ensure that changes in vision are picked up as many eye conditions have no symptoms and can rapidly result in permanent sight loss."



David Keegan is photographed with RTE News Reader, Anne Doyle at the launch of AMD Aware, a new smartphone app developed by NCBI and supported by Bayer, which aims to raise awareness of the condition.

ICO / Novartis Research Bursary

The Irish College of Ophthalmologists is delighted to announce the details of its 2014 Eye Research Bursary, supported by Novartis.

The annual bursary, awarded to a medical doctor, has been instrumental in facilitating eye doctors to undertake a period of research or specific training in an eye care centre of excellence. The fellowship award is an unrestricted educational grant.

Dr. Eva Lindgren, Medical Director, Novartis Ireland said, "Novartis is delighted to partner with the ICO again in 2014 to support the Eye Research Bursary. As a company, Novartis is committed to Ophthalmology and to research in Ireland. We currently have four Ophthalmology clinical trials running in several centres throughout the country and are delighted to continue our support in this area".

The ICO is inviting interested medical practitioners to submit their applications to Siobhan Kelly at the College by email no later than Friday, August 29, 2014. The prize is not restricted to eye doctors in training and those in practice are encouraged to consider making a suitable application. Further details are available on www.eyedoctors.ie

The recipient of the ICO/Novartis Research will be announced at the Annual Adare Retina Meeting on October 2nd. The award recipient will present an update on their research at the ICO Annual Meeting in 2015.

The 2013 recipient of the award was Dr Micheal O'Rourke, Eye Doctor at the Royal Victoria Eye and ear Hospital, the Dublin Academic Health Care Clinical Research Centre and The Conway Institute, St Vincent's University Hospital, UCD for his project entitled 'Acute Anterior Uveitis in an Irish Cohort: Clinical Characteristics and Molecular Mechanisms'. Dr O'Rourke presented an update on his research at this year's ICO Annual Conference in Limerick.

New Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines Published

The National Programme Office for Traffic Medicine, a joint initiative between the Road Safety Authority (RSA) and the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI), recently launched *Sláinte agus Tiomáint Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines* for bus and truck drivers, known as Group 2 drivers. This follows the release of new guidelines relating to car and motorcycle drivers (Group 1 licence holders) which were officially introduced into law in January of this year.

The new guidelines provide a national framework on standards in traffic medicine in Ireland and reflect recent developments in medicines, such as improvements in diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions.

Garry Treacy and Pat Logan are the ICO representatives on the Vision Standards Panel in the Department of Traffic Medicine of the RCPI. Other ophthalmic representatives on the Vision Panel are Jania Byrne, Orthoptist, and Martin O'Brien, Optometrist.

Speaking at the launch of the new guidelines, Pat Logan said, "Vision is the most important source of information when driving, so visual assessment for driving is a major public health issue. The measurement of visual acuity, contrast sensitivity, fields of view, twilight vision and vision under glare conditions are of the upmost importance.

"Understanding the impact of a sight condition or the way certain medicines might affect driving is a vital aspect of road safety. These guidelines are there to protect the public and support medical practitioners in making decisions about an individual's 'fitness to drive' ability. The eye doctors of Ireland welcome this collaboration between the RSA and the Department of Traffic Medicine in the RCPI in providing clear guidelines on the visual criteria for driving."

The update Guidelines are available to download on the website of the National Driver Licence Service www.ndls.ie and the website of the Road Safety Authority www.rsa.ie.

The visual assessment for driving has become increasingly important due to the introduction of EU rules which the Vision Panel have been modifying to suit Irish standards.

The new *Sláinte agus Tiomáint Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines* also contain updated guidelines for Group 1 drivers and the RSA have committed to updating the standards contained in the Guidelines on an annual basis to ensure that they continue to represent best practice in new and emerging medical literature and guide doctors on the standards as set out in European Directives and regulations made in Ireland under the Road Traffic Acts. The main aim of the document is to assist doctors in their assessment of drivers with medical conditions which may affect their fitness to drive.

Recently the RSA have introduced a medical declaration form which asks all drivers to self-declare certain existing medical conditions when completing a driver licence application, renewal or exchange form. Group 2 drivers need to also submit a Medical Report (D501) with these forms, to be completed by their doctor

with each application/renewal. The maximum licensing period for a Group 2 driver is for five years.

Pat Logan said the most significant change with the new guidelines for Group 2 Drivers is that they must have full vision in one eye and at least 6/60 in the other and a binocular field of 160 degrees on the horizontal and 60 degrees on the vertical in order to fulfil the visual criteria. Eye Doctors have a legal obligation to comment on a patient's visual status for both groups and Pat is reminding colleagues that eye doctors are not making the rules, but just applying them. You are not telling your patient they are not fit to drive, but that they do or do not fulfil the visual criteria.

The *Sláinte agus Tiomáint Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines* were developed by the National Programme Office for Traffic Medicine in consultation with Royal College of Physicians of Ireland Working Group on Traffic Medicine, which represents 36 organisations, including medical professionals, patient organisations, driver licensing authority, industry and drivers.

We are very pleased to announce that Garry Treacy and Patricia Logan have agreed to stay on the Vision Standards board for a further 3 years.



*L-R Prof Conor O'Keane, Treasurer, RCPI, Professor Desmond O'Neill, National Programme Director for Traffic Medicine and Mr Declan Naughton, Director of Driver Testing and Licensing, RSA, photographed at the launch of *Sláinte agus Tiomáint Medical Fitness to Drive Guidelines* for bus and truck drivers, known as Group 2 drivers, in April at the RCPI, Dublin.*

Fighting Blindness Report

Update from Fighting Blindness on their recent activities.

In June, CEO Avril Daly and Head of Fundraising Tony Ward travelled to the USA to discuss the work of Fighting Blindness in Ireland and to explore potential cross-Atlantic partnerships.

Irish Embassy Reception, Washington DC

A special reception was held for Fighting Blindness in the Irish Embassy in Washington DC. It was well attended with representatives from academia, government, research, industry and Irish networks. Tony Ward told guests how the on-going work of Fighting Blindness in basic research has led to breakthroughs that have helped to bring about the era of human clinical trial development. In this scenario, we need to ensure patients are prepared for clinical trials by being equipped with the best information about their conditions to enable access to appropriate trials when they become available.

In the case of inherited retinal disease where there is a genetic component, it is essential for patients to have not only a clinical diagnosis but also a genetic one. Fighting Blindness is funding a project to do just that. Target 3000 aims to provide access to next-generation exome sequencing to the 3000 people in Ireland estimated to be affected by a rare retinal disease. This will give them the best possible information to make informed decisions about the management of their condition. This data will then be stored on the National Inherited Retinopathies Register.

Fighting Blindness is working with Trinity College Dublin, The Royal Victoria Eye and Ear, The Mater Hospital Dublin and Queens University Belfast on an all-Ireland register. The key objectives of this project are to empower patients through knowledge, and also to

enable further exploration of genetic eye disease while placing Ireland in the best possible position to attract clinical trials which will further promote innovation.

Also speaking at the event was Dr Stephen Rose, Chief Scientific Officer at Foundation Fighting Blindness in the USA. Dr. Rose gave an insightful and engaging overview of the research being undertaken by The Foundation Fighting Blindness and the significant advancements in the area of gene therapy, cell therapy, compound therapy and optogenetics funded since its formation in 1971 by patients affected by sight loss, just like Fighting Blindness Ireland. He spoke of the joint projects undertaken over the years by the two groups. FFB with FB Ireland have funded the genetics department in Trinity College Dublin who discovered the first gene responsible for RP in 1989. This breakthrough resulted in the development of the spin out company Genable Technologies, which has long been supported by both charities. This technology is now at pre-trial stage.

Avril Daly explained further the importance of the development of registers particularly for conditions that are rare. She explained that without support for these we will not be in a position to attract human clinical trials for new and innovative potential treatments to Ireland. She pointed out that we have the clinical and scientific networks, we have the facilities such as the Dublin Centre for Clinical Research, and charities are supporting the development of infrastructures but said that this is unsustainable without start support. Ms. Daly emphasised that the collection and appropriate registration and storage of genetic and other data is vital in the development of good healthcare systems. Ms Daly highlighted the imminent publication of the National Plan for Rare Diseases by

the Department of Health on July 3rd and emphasised the changes this plan could make to the lives of patients, their careers, the medical profession as well as research and innovation and stressed the need for implementation.

Avril noted that FB has established and facilitates an Ophthalmology Clinical Trials Network where world class researchers and clinicians are working to bring clinical trials in rare genetic eye disease to Ireland. The work of The National Coalition for a Vision Strategy in Ireland was also discussed.

Visions 2014

Fighting Blindness were invited to attend VISIONS 2014, the national conference of the Foundation Fighting Blindness (FFB) in the United States. The conference is designed to enable individuals and families affected by retinal diseases to get easy access to information on the latest research. The meeting also provides the most up-to-date information on clinical trials. Ground-breaking research was presented at the event in conversation style, with opportunities for patients to ask questions directly to the experts and a platform for discussion, as well as creating space to meet other families from around the country who are living with the same disease. This format is very similar to the well-established Retina Conference organised by Fighting Blindness in Ireland.

As research progresses and becomes more global it is important for patient groups funding projects that may lead to potential therapies to work more closely and learn from each other's experiences. The invitation to attend Visions provided Fighting Blindness with an opportunity to see how the foundation works towards their strategic objectives in the development of therapies and where

we can learn from each other. As an organisation established by patients and who are a driving force in retinal research, with its own Clinical Research Institute, the FFB strategy closely mirrors our own here in Ireland, and it was extremely helpful and encouraging to see how all of our combined efforts are creating momentum and bringing about change to people living with sight loss.

Retina International World Congress

Fighting Blindness also attended the 18th Retina International World Congress that recently took place in Paris. This four day conference brought together the international community of vision researchers and clinicians along with patient representatives from 33 national groups in order to hear about the latest developments regarding retinal degenerations. A number of key messages were delivered to the delegates:

Gene therapy for forms of vision loss have come of age; the number of

gene therapy clinical trials that are ongoing or planned has steadily increased including trials for forms of retinitis pigmentosa, choroideremia, Stargardt disease and some forms of Usher syndrome. In fact, over 200 people worldwide have already participated in these early stage trials, and many more are scheduled including the Irish company Genable technologies whose lead therapy is for a form of autosomal dominant retinitis pigmentosa.

The development of oral drug compounds with the ability to deliver neuroprotective effects to the photoreceptor cells and slow cell death has begun to gather momentum and commercial involvement. Many of these approaches also have a benefit in the potential to be delivered through eye drops.

We learned that active patient involvement in the clinical trial process for rare inherited retinopathies is essential. Patient-reported subjective changes in conjunction with objective standardised vision testing are hugely

valuable in order to measure clinical trial outcomes in low vision patients.

Finally, Fighting Blindness presented alongside RP Fighting Blindness UK and Foundation Fighting Blindness in the USA on the subject of patient registries for rare inherited retinal degenerations. This was an excellent opportunity to showcase the Irish partnership of Target 3000 that has been established between Dr Paul Kenna of the RVEEH and TCD, Mr David Keegan of the Mater Hospital and Miss Giuliana Silvestri of the Royal Victoria Hospital Belfast and discuss best practise to successfully integrate this data in order to allow eligibility of Irish patients for international clinical trials.

For more information on any of our work, please visit our website www.FightingBlindness.ie or call our office on 01 6789 004.

Anna Moran

External Affairs Manager, Fighting Blindness

New OCT Machine for Ophthalmology Department at Beaumont Hospital

An Optical Coherence Tomography (OCT) machine was recently funded and commissioned by Novartis for the Ophthalmology Department in Beaumont Hospital.

The machine, which costs in the region of €50k, is enabling the Eye Department in the Hospital to open an ocular toxicity clinic in Autumn 2014. This will be the first clinic of its kind in Ireland and the OCT is an essential piece of equipment in the running of this clinic. It will be used to assess and advise patients who have been prescribed systemic medications which can have potential serious ocular side effects.

The Ophthalmology team at Beaumont, headed up by Consultant

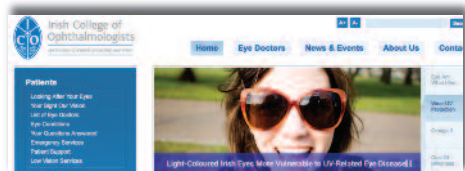
Ophthalmic Surgeon Patricia Logan, are grateful to Novartis for funding this machine which is a welcome addition to the suite of tests that the

Ophthalmology Department at Beaumont Hospital provides to ensure the best eye care service for patients attending the hospital.



Pictured are the Ophthalmology Team with representatives of Novartis, Liam Duffy, CEO, Patricia Logan, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon and Dan Healy, Consultant Neurologist

Website Redevelopment



The College is currently working with our web designers on re-developing and updating the eyedoctors.ie site.

The aim is to create a more user friendly experience for visitors and to ensure the information people are searching our website for is easily identifiable when they land on the home page. The updates will reflect the findings of web analytics into the reasons why people are visiting or searching eyedoctors.ie and what improvements we can make to ensure they find what they are looking for.

One area which needs further expansion and enhancement is the Eye Doctor Directory section of the site. An analysis of visitors showed that 'find an eye doctor' is one of the main reasons why people visit eyedoctors.ie. We will be contacting all members in the coming weeks to update the individual biography and contact details to ensure we are addressing this important search topic by the public.

We look forward to keeping in touch with members on the progress and revealing the new look website in the early autumn.

Upcoming Courses and Meetings

September 1st – Micro Surgical Skills Course – For Year 1 Ophthalmology Trainees – welcome to the 10 new trainees who joined ophthalmology this July

September 10th – Trabeculectomy Course - Aoife Doyle is running this course in the Lab in the RCSI for year 3 & 4 trainees

September 17 & 18th – From Cells to Tissues: Stem Cells, Tissue Repair & Tissue Engineering for Diabetes, Eye Disease & Neurodegenerative Diseases – Dublin City University – This 2 day programme includes a day dedicated to Corneal Disease organised by Conor Murphy and Billy Power

September 24th – Medical Advertising Policy Meeting – RCSI – see details separately in this newsletter

September 26th – Refraction Course – RVEEH – Maureen Hillery and colleagues will run this annual course for trainees

October 2nd – Adare Retina Meeting – organised by Marie Hickey Dwyer, this year's programme will include the announcement of the winner of the Novartis/ICO research bursary

October 24th – Mater Ophthalmology Update Meeting – organised by Colm O'Brien and taking place in the McAuley Centre, Eccles Street, Dublin 7. This meeting will feature a number of national and international speakers who will discuss the latest developments and current management of a wide array of clinical and research areas. Topics to be covered include angle closure glaucoma, giant cell arteritis, ocular involvement in TIA/CVA, vision and driving. Professor Michael Farrell (Beaumont) will give a talk on traumatic brain injury in sport.

This year we will have the inaugural Peter Eustace Lecture, which will be delivered by Professor Ursula Schloetzer-Schrehardt from Erlangen, Germany on Pseudoexfoliation Glaucoma.

November 5th – Ocular Anaesthesia Course – This one day course organised by Dr Muhammad Mukhtar and the College of Anaesthetists is available to ICO trainees

November 7th & 8th Retina 2014 – the annual Fighting Blindness conference will take place in Croke Park Dublin. Further details area available on www.retina.ie

World Ophthalmology Congress Tokyo



Pictured at the World Ophthalmology Congress in Tokyo in April, Michael Brennan, Siobhan Kelly, Gregory Skuta President American Academy of Ophthalmology and Jane Aguirre VP of Global Alliance AAO.

National Audit of Referrals Update

The College would like to thank all members who participated in the National Audit of Referrals. The response rate has been very good and has resulted in excess of 3000 patient cases studies to be reviewed. The collation and analysis of the data is currently underway and that process will shortly conclude.

The information from the audit will be used as a means to examine the wider community's method of accessing eye services in Ireland and will be very helpful in advocating for appropriate resources with the Department of Health and the HSE.