



**Irish College of
Ophthalmologists**
Eye Doctors of Ireland
Protecting your Vision

ICO NEWS

ISSUE 38

WINTER 2024



John Doris

President's Message

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the winter edition of the ICO Newsletter.

I would like to acknowledge the support of those who attended and presented at our third ICO Eye Care in Focus meeting in early October at the Gibson Hotel. This meeting was an opportunity for networking and sharing knowledge among allied eye health care professionals. We had two clinical sessions on the cataract pathway and paediatric care. There was a practical session on practice sustainability and an update from the National Clinical Programme in Ophthalmology.

I would like to thank Professor John Nolan, a Fulbright Scholar at the South East Technological University, for his keynote speech on the role of nutrition in protecting vision. He also discussed the advanced plans for a new School of Optometry in Waterford which potentially could be extended to include the first orthoptists' school in Ireland. This is a very exciting development, which will go a long way to safeguard the workforce needed to roll out the national integrated eye care plan.

I am also pleased to announce the appointment of Mary Jo Eustace Ryan as the new ICO representative to the Traffic Medicine Programme. I would like to extend our gratitude to Patricia Logan for dedicated service in this role over the years. ICO president elect, Gerry Fahy has been nominated to join the RCSI Surgical Affairs' Committee and Kate Coleman joins the RCSI Professional Practice Committee. Thank you all for your continued representation.

At the College's Winter Meeting on November 15th, we had a really interactive and thought-provoking discussion on the current and potential future direction of public and independent practice in Ireland, expertly chaired by Richard Comer. My thanks to James O'Reilly, UPMC Hospitals and Dr Shane Keogh, GP for their excellent talks and to our panel members, Sean Gallagher, Entrepreneur and ICO Board Director, Aidan O'Reilly, Interim General Secretary of the IHCA, and Professor Robert Scott for their invaluable contributions to the conversation.

Professor Scott delivered the Annual Montgomery Lecture that evening, providing an insight into his exposure and management of ocular trauma as a former Royal Air Force Lead Military Consultant Ophthalmologist. A fascinating lecture, and wonderful close to an invaluable day of clinical and practical learning.

As we approach the year end, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you

for the impact that you make on peoples' lives. It is also an appropriate time to reflect on the great work that we do collectively in Ireland. On behalf of the College, I would like to wish you a happy and restful festive season.

Kind regards

JOHN DORIS,
ICO President

ICO Winter Meeting 2024

The ICO annual Winter Meeting took place on the afternoon of Friday, 15th November at the Albert Theatre in the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. The theme of discussion 'What Might the Future of Practice Look Like?' explored the evolving dynamics of public and private healthcare practice in Ireland, addressing potential transformations over the coming years.

The session featured presentations from Mr. John Doris (University Hospital Waterford), Mr. James O'Reilly (UPMC

Hospital, Waterford and Aut Even Hospital, Kilkenny), and Dr. Shane McKeogh (Solas Medical Centre, Dublin; ➡



(l-r) Pictured at the Irish College of Ophthalmologists Winter Meeting are keynote speakers, panelists and session chairs Dr Shane McKeogh, ICGP/HSE GP Integrated Care Lead for Adult Respiratory Disease and Principle GP, Solas Medical Centre, Dublin, Mr Sean Gallagher, Entrepreneur and ICO Board Member, Mr James O'Reilly, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, UPMC Aut Even Hospital, Kilkenny and Whitfield Hospital, Waterford, Ms Janice Brady, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, University Hospital Waterford, Mr John Doris, President, ICO and Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, University Hospital Waterford, Mr Richard Comer, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Bon Secours Hospital, Galway, Mr Aidan O'Reilly, Interim Secretary General, Irish Hospital Consultant Association, Professor Robert Scott, Consultant Ophthalmologist, St John and St Elizabeth Hospital, London and Professor Conor Murphy, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin.

ICGP/HSE GP Integrated Care Lead for Adult Respiratory Disease). They discussed shifts in ownership and funding structures within the medical sector, examining how these developments might affect public, private, and general practice.

A dynamic panel discussion followed, with insights from business entrepreneur and ICO Board member, Mr Sean Gallagher, Mr Aidan O'Reilly, Interim Secretary General of the Irish Hospital Consultant Association and Professor Robert Scott. They engaged in an open conversation about the role of investment capital in healthcare and its implications for care delivery. Mr. Richard Comer (Bon Secours Hospital, Galway) chaired and moderated the event.

Congratulations to those who delivered podium paper presentations of their research at the outset of the winter meeting. Our thanks to Prof Conor Murphy, ICO Scientific and Professional Competence Committee and Ms Janice Brady, University Hospital Waterford for chairing this session, and to all who contributed to the thought-provoking discussions throughout the day.



Mr Richard Comer, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Bon Secours Hospital, Galway (ICO Winter Meeting Chair and Moderator) photographed with Mr Sean Gallagher, Entrepreneur and ICO Board Director.



Panelists Mr Sean Gallagher, Prof Robert Scott and Mr Aidan O'Reilly

Annual Montgomery Lecture 2024



Professor Robert Scott, Annual Montgomery Lecturer 2024, pictured with Mr John Doris, ICO President at the Albert Lecture Theatre, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Dublin, on Friday, November 15th, 2024.

A highlight of the ICO Winter Meeting day was the 108th Annual Montgomery Lecture, delivered by Professor Robert Scott, Consultant Ophthalmologist at St John and St Elizabeth Hospital, London.

Professor Scott is a former Royal Air Force eye consultant at both the Birmingham and Midland Eye Centre (BMEC) and the Royal Centre for Defence Medicine (RCDM) at Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham.

His lecture, titled "Traumateyesed: Coping with Major Ocular Injuries," provided a unique and invaluable clinical learning perspective on the management of severe ocular trauma and offered crucial insights into the challenges of treating major eye injuries in high-pressure environments, as well as practical guidance for

ophthalmologists dealing with eye trauma cases in civilian healthcare settings.

Professor Scott participated in the panel discussion during that afternoon's Winter Meeting, where he shared further expertise on ophthalmology healthcare delivery and discussed evolving management models for the specialty in light of his experience of the UK healthcare system.

It was an enriching day of learning and exchange, and we thank Professor Scott for his time and imparting his expertise.

Traumatised: A career in eye injuries

It is a great honour to be invited to deliver the Montgomery lecture and a big thank you to the Irish College of Ophthalmologists and the Montgomery family for supporting this lecture series since 1916. I am the second Royal Air Force Ophthalmologist to deliver a Montgomery Lecture, but the first to lecture on management of eye injury and considering the propensity for almost all Irish sports and pastimes to cause eye injuries; it is about time too!

I have spent a 30-year career starting with the consideration of aviation physiology of my RAF Montgomery predecessor, but in the early 2000s it veered off track to deal with eye trauma from the UK conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. I was lucky to have been fellowship trained in oculoplastics and vitreoretinal surgery and this gave me the confidence to work front to back of the eye to sort the injuries. I was continuously on-call for



Professor Robert Scott

the best part of 15 years with some respite on 3 missions to Iraq and a 6-month tour of Afghanistan, all with my NHS feet held firmly to the fire in terms of caseload and on-call. My expertise is borne of high case numbers, all with long follow-up periods.

All ophthalmologists, like myself, will be expected to deal with severe eye trauma. If you are not managing such patients day to day, it can be difficult to find a framework to work from. Eye injury is a disaster with life-changing functional, social and cosmetic effects. The role of the eye surgeon is to manage the patient, their family and the injury. Management should be staged with the aim of doing as little as is effective at any stage, initially aiming to stabilise the eye and then offering secondary management of longer-term complications. Eye protection prevents the worst effects of ocular injury and should be encouraged at a personal and legislative level. Eye injury patients require life-long monitoring and

patients must know this.

For ease of memory, I organised the initial management of eye trauma cases into the acronym CLASSIC as follows. Perform a lateral **C**anthotomy and cantholysis for retrobulbar haemorrhage immediately if required. Take a detailed **L**og of history and examination with timings for any insurance or legal reports that will be required in the future. Make sure that systemic **A**ntibiotics are prescribed if there is an open globe injury. Ensure that an appropriate **S**can is performed, s-ray, CT scan or ultrasound 'B' scan. Perform a primary closure of the globe often with a **S**uture. Do not neglect communication with the patient's family, and sort any general **I**ssues that they might have, that is what the hospital welfare department is for. Ensure your patient is in a **C**omfortable and quiet environment to minimise stress and reduce potential Charles Bonnet syndrome. Follow these guidelines and you can handle the worst eye trauma that presents to you.

Yours sincerely,
Professor Robert Scott
MBBS, FRCS(Ed), FRCOphth, DM
Consultant Ophthalmologist

Recipient of John Blake Medal

The John Blake Medal for Best Research Paper Presentation at the Irish College of Ophthalmologists Winter Meeting 2024 was awarded to Dr Sara Ahmed, ICO International Medical Graduate Trainee and SHO, Cork University Hospital and South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital, Cork. Dr Ahmed was awarded the prize for her podium presentation of her research paper "Indications and Outcomes of Iris-Claw Intraocular Lens Implantation: A Comprehensive Analysis of Lens Positioning"

Dr Ahmed's study found Iris-Claw Intraocular Lens (artisan lens implantation) is a versatile and effective procedure, with no significant age or gender restrictions for patient eligibility. Her study conclusion stated that while the position of the implanted lens does not appear to influence the overall incidence of complications, retropupillary implantation was associated with a higher occurrence of elevated intraocular pressure.

In terms of visual outcomes, the majority of patients achieved satisfactory results, with most best-corrected visual acuity (BCVA) falling between 6/6 and 6/9, regardless of preexisting ocular comorbidities. These outcomes suggest that Artisan lens implantation offers favorable visual recovery and can be considered a reliable option for patients with complex lens conditions.

The hospital based study, conducted at Cork University Hospital and South Infirmary Victoria University Hospital, included a total of 42 eyes from 39 patients who underwent Artisan IOL implantation surgeries for the period between April 2022 and January 2024.

The John Blake Medal was first awarded in 2019 for the best research paper at the annual conference of the Irish College of Ophthalmologists. It is in recognition of Dr Blake's involvement in the successful lobbying of the Irish government to make seatbelt wearing

compulsory and the change from toughened to laminated glass for car windscreens. These changes virtually eliminated perforating eye injuries from road traffic accidents.



Congratulations to Dr Sara Ahmed, who was awarded the John Blake Medal for Best Research Presentation at the ICO Winter Meeting 2024. Dr Ahmed is pictured being presented with her medal by Dr Alison Blake, daughter of the late Dr John Blake.

ICO Masterclass Series 2024

Building on from the success of the ICO Masterclass Series of 2022 (medical retina) and 2023 (glaucoma), the clinical focus for the Masterclass Series of 2024 was on Neuro-Ophthalmology and Paediatric Ophthalmology.



L-R Dr Ruth Ellard, Dr Alan Hopkins, Dr Simon Neary, Miss Yvonne Delaney, Miss Jane Ashworth, Dr Kathleen Gorman, Ms Kathryn McCreery, Ms Aine NiMhealoid, Dr Sanushka Moodley, Dr Mohammed Mohamed, Ms Sarah Chamney, Ms Clare McCloskey and Ms Ann Marie Mongan.

The annual intensive clinical education event is aimed at promoting excellence at the highest level of sub specialty training and learning for trainees on the ICO National Training Programmes. The programme, coordinated by ICO Dean, Miss Yvonne Delaney, is designed to support and align with the subspecialty teaching and training that takes place both before and after the event.

The 2024 masterclass titled "Challenges of the Optic Nerve," featured expert presentations from renowned speakers:

- Professor John Chen (Mayo Clinic, USA) spoke on "Atypical Optic Neuritis in the Paediatric and Adult Population".
- Dr Kathleen Gorman (Temple Street Children's Hospital, Ireland) pro-

vided insights on "Atypical Optic Neuritis: The Paediatric Neurologist's Perspective".

- Miss Jane Ashworth (Manchester Royal Eye Hospital, UK) presented on "Management of 'Swollen' Optic Discs in the Paediatric Population – The Manchester Pathway and Experience".

The event, chaired by Ms Kathryn McCreery (Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Children's Health Ireland at Crumlin), also included case presentations by Dr Alan Hopkins, Dr Simon Neary, Dr Sanushka Moodley, and Dr Mohammed Mohamed, followed by an engaging Q&A session between attendees and panelists.

All speakers very kindly allowed their presentation to be recorded and are available on the Trainee Portal strictly for the benefit of trainees on the National Training Programmes.

ICO Microsurgical Skills Course

The ICO Microsurgical Skills Course took place in the RCSI Surgical Labs on August 26th 2024 for ICO 1st year Basic Surgical Trainees, Basic Medical Trainees and International Medical Graduate Trainees. The course is delivered by Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon's Mr Tim Fulcher and Mr Paul O'Brien with the help of Ophthalmic Nurse Denis Ga'an (RVEEH).



Pictured at the ICO Microsurgical Skills Course L-R back row: Mr Tim Fulcher, Dr Stephen Kelly (BST), Dr Adan Khan (BST), Dr Azza Mohammed (BMT), Dr Umer Maqsood (IMG), Dr Zawar Ali Rathore (IMG), Dr Marcus Conway (BMT), Dr Ciaran Doyle (BMT), Dr Ciara O'Byrne (BMT), Dr Mohammed Ali Khalid (IMG), Mr Paul O'Brien. L-R front row: Denis Ga'an, Ophthalmic Nurse, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dr Muzan Ali (IMG), Dr Izzati Fadzil (BMT), Dr Emily Greenan (BST), Dr Fionnuala Kennedy (BMT) and Dr Ian Brennan (BST).

ICO Anterior Vitrectomy Course

The ICO Anterior Vitrectomy Course for surgical trainees took place on Tuesday September 24th and Wednesday 25th at the RCSI Lab in Dublin. The wet-lab and mock operation facilities of this mandatory course allow trainees to expand their hands-on technical experience and further progress their development as a procedural and technical expert. The course was coordinated by Miss Yvonne Delaney and the Faculty included Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon's Mr Noel Horgan, Mr Patrick Talty, Mr Zubair Idrees, Mr Barry Quill, Mr John Doris and Mr Princeton Lee, and Prof Eva Doherty, Director of Human Factors and Patient Safety Programme, RCSI.



Pictured from the course L-r back row: Mr Barry Quill, Mr John Doris, Dr Robert McGrath, Dr Sarah Powell, Dr Amy O'Regan. L-r front row: Dr Glynis Hanrahan, Dr Triona Butler, Dr Aisling McGlacken-Byrne, Dr Liam Mulcahy, Dr Fionn O'Leary, Miss Yvonne Delaney and Mr Princeton Lee

ICO Phaco Bootcamp

The Phaco Bootcamp Course, coordinated by Mr Princeton Lee, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, took place on July 17th 2024 at St Vincent's University Hospital, Dublin.

The dedicated surgical course is designed for Year 1 specialty trainees in ophthalmic surgery and those on the ICO International Medical Graduates (IMG) programme.



Pictured at the 2024 course are (L-R): Dr Adan Khan, Dr Emily Greenan, Dr Ian Brennan, Mr Princeton Lee, Dr Aaron Donnelly, Dr Umer Maqsood, Dr Glynis Hanrahan, Dr Muzan Badreldin Mohamed Ali, Dr Stephen Kelly.

Spark Summit 2024 Innovation Award

Congratulations to Dr Brian Woods, ICO Higher Surgical Trainee, on receiving the Irish NCHD Bright Spark Innovation Award at the Spark Summit 2024 for his project, "H-BOP: Home-Based Ocular Perfusion Pressure Estimation." The award was presented on June 20th at The Mansion House in Dublin.

Dr Wood's project aims to empower patients in managing ocular perfusion pressure (OPP) through a home-based monitoring system that combines iCare Home2 tonometry for intraocular pressure (IOP) with portable wrist-based blood pressure (BP) monitoring. This innovative approach will allow patients



Dr Brian Woods

to monitor OPP dips in real-time and help clinicians optimise the timing of BP and IOP-lowering medications, potentially reducing the risk of disease progression. It is also hoped that it will allow for differentiation of patients with ocular hypertension Vs. patients with early glaucoma.

The project team has been awarded Spark Seed funding to acquire the necessary devices, including wrist-based BP monitors and an iCare Home2 unit. The initial phase will involve a pilot study to validate the methodology, focusing on nocturnal OPP dipping in patients with normotensive glaucoma.

Dr. Woods expressed gratitude to Prof. Colm O'Brien, Miss Yvonne Delaney, and Dr. Basem Fouda for their invaluable support in establishing the pilot study. The ICO extends best wishes to Dr. Woods and his team for the success of this promising research project.

SOE EU Leadership programme

The College is delighted to announce and congratulate Ms Christine Goodchild on her recent appointment as the Irish College of Ophthalmologists nominee to the European Society of Ophthalmology (SOE) European Leadership Programme.

The programme has been successful in identifying specialists who are taking responsibilities within European Ophthalmology and in collaborating closely with the American and Pan-American Societies (AAO and PAAO). It was first launched in 2005. The duration of the EULDP is 2 years and starts and ends at the Annual European Congress of Ophthalmology.

We wish Christine every success and enjoyment on the programme. We know she will be a wonderful advocate and representative on the programme!

New Testimonial Video

The College has recently launched a brand-new testimonial video highlighting the National Training Programme in Medical Ophthalmology.



Dr Fiona Harney, Consultant Ophthalmologist and Clinical Lecturer in Ophthalmology, University of Galway is pictured with ICO HST Dr Grace McCabe, and doctors visiting the ICO information stand at the Galway University Hospital NCHD Careers Event on the 16th October.

Launched this autumn to coincide with the ICO's Careers in Ophthalmology event and the opening of applications for the July 2025 intake, the video provides valuable insights into the training journey and career opportunities within ophthalmology.

A special thank you to ICO trainees Dr. Alan Hopkins and Dr. Meghann Canning, Paediatric Ophthalmology Clinical Fellow Dr. Christine Bourke, and to Consultant Medical Ophthalmologists Dr. Emer Doolan and Dr. Duncan Rogers for their time, support, and contributions to making this video possible. The end product is a

testament to their dedication and collaboration.

Members can view the testimonial video on the College website at www.eyedoctors.ie or through our social media channels on Instagram and Twitter at @eyedoctorsirl.

Additionally, the College remains committed to engaging with medical schools and intern networks across the country. We continue to participate in career events—both in-person and online—to inform and encourage medical students, interns, and NCHDs about the various pathways and opportunities available in medical and surgical ophthalmology.

Our thanks to ICO Dean, Miss Yvonne Delaney, for hosting the ICO careers talk online on Wednesday, October 16th and to Dr Emily Greenan, Basic Surgical Trainee and Dr Fionnuala Kennedy, Basic Medical Trainee, for their fantastic talks about their experience of the training pathway.

We extend our sincere thanks to the professors of ophthalmology, lecturers, and tutors who support this important work each year.



Eye Health Education Videos

Social media is a powerful tool for the College to connect with key stakeholders, share important news, and raise awareness about eye health. Visual content and video media is often the most convenient and quickest mode in which many people want to receive information.

In this vein, the College is keen to create short video content, guided by our members, for use across our social media channels (X, Instagram and LinkedIn) to educate the public on common eye conditions and treatment options.

This may be, for example, a simple explanation of “what is AMD”, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy or amblyopia, what the main treatment options are for the most common eye conditions, advice on a patient's visit to the eye clinic (what to expect), how to look after our eye health and so on.

It is also to consider the FAQ patients speak with their doctors about and develop helpful short video content for this, keeping the guidance practical and general in nature.

We know some of our members are active on social media with this type of educational material which is fantastic.

If you think you might be interested in helping the College, we'd be delighted to hear from you! Please contact Ciara Keenan, Communications Manager at:

ciara.keenan@eyedoctors.ie

Supporting ICO Members in their Social Media Activity

The RCSI runs a ‘Social Media for Doctors’ course (online, 3 hours €160) for anyone who would like to explore the opportunities and challenges of using social media in healthcare, including as a mass communication tool during infectious disease epidemics.

Visit: www.rcsi.com/dublin/professional-cpd/cpdss/social-media-for-doctors/course-details

Pan-Ireland Ophthalmology Day

The Pan-Ireland Ophthalmology Conference 2024, hosted by Queen's University Belfast, took place Thursday 10th and Friday 11th October 2024. This annual event, coinciding with World Sight Day, aims to raise awareness of the global issue of avoidable blindness and visual impairment welcoming leading clinicians and researchers from around the world to share their expertise.

Professor Ben Burton, President of the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, and Mr John Doris, President of the Irish College of Ophthalmologists, officially opened proceedings on day two of the conference. The agenda featured clinical research presentations and case studies, followed by discussions with the audience of clinicians, allied health professionals and researchers with an interest in retinal diseases. Also in attendance were diabetologists and diabetic retinopathy screening case-workers.

In his address, Mr Doris told delegates he was delighted to be back in Belfast, where he had studied Medicine at Queen's and begun his ophthalmology career at the Royal Victoria Hospital, with many fond and happy memories of this time. He emphasised the significance of the 'whole of Ireland' focus of the Pan-Ireland event and the collaboration it fosters—not only between Northern

and Southern Ireland but also across the UK and US, and the global education and influence the event brings.

John spoke about the evolution of the model of eye care in Ireland and the ICO National Training Programmes in Surgical and Medical Ophthalmology, the latter which was introduced in 2018 to address the existing and growing demand for specialists in the area of glaucoma, medical retina and paediatric eye care. John pointed to the new grade Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist posts in the Irish public health service, introduced in 2019, with 15 current posts in place. Integrated eye care teams, led by the Consultant Ophthalmologist, are working across the community and acute setting nationally, with a continued roll out in motion.

John mentioned the recent ICO Eye Care in Focus meeting, describing it as a key event in the ophthalmic annual



Mr John Doris

calendar. This meeting supports clinical education and shared learning for the entire eye care team, including optometrists, orthoptists, technicians, nurses, and medical and surgical ophthalmologists.

The afternoon session at the Pan Ireland Ophthalmology Day featured a special joint programme by Women in Vision UK and Ireland. Research presentations from both Northern and Southern Ireland were showcased, along with cases presented by trainees. The meeting goes from strength to strength each year, and John thanked and acknowledged the organisers, Professor Tunde Peto, Dr Michael Williams, Professor Julie Silvestri and Professor Augusto Azuara-Blanco, for hosting this important annual gathering for the ophthalmic community.

ICO President, Mr. John Doris, delivers Knauer Lecture at AESC Annual Meeting

ICO President, Mr John Doris, was honoured to be invited to deliver the Knauer Lecture at the 66th AESC Annual Meeting, held at Kilkea Castle on July 31, 2024. John expressed how much he enjoyed the experience, describing the event as both social and richly educational, much like our own collegiate Annual Meeting.

During the event, John was presented with a personalised plaque in recognition of his lecture by Dr. Ann Acers-Warn, Vice Chair of the American Board of Ophthalmology (ABO) and President of the American Eye Study Club Foundation.



ICO Annual Conference 2025



The College is pleased to share the date and venue for our Annual Conference in 2025!

21st – 23rd May, 2025
Lyrath Convention Centre,
Lyrath Estate Hotel,
Kilkenny

Further details on the event will follow in the early new year but please mark the date in your calendar!

SOCIAL DIARY



Dr Rory Holohan, Mouayad Masalkhi, School of Medicine, University College Dublin, Dr Danyal Memon and Dr Daniel Broderick



Professor Robert Scott, St John's and St Elizabeth's Hospital, London and Ms Mina Scott



Ms Siobhan Kelly and Mr Gerry Fahy



Mr Brendan Cummings, Rachel Madden, School of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin, Ms Janice Brady, and Mr James O'Reilly



Ms Kathryn McCreery, Mr John Stokes and Ms Emer Henry



Dr Olya Scannell, Dr Emer Doolan and Miss Yvonne Delaney,

ICO Winter Meeting and Montgomery Lecture 15 November 2024, Albert Theatre, RCSI



Ms Shauna Quinn and Dr Aisling Foley Nolan



Dr Ed Ahern and Dr Fionn O'Leary



Dr Grace McCabe and Dr Robert McGrath



Dr Nicole Heng, Anna Mulcahy, School of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin and Dr Bridget Moran



Mr Sean Gallagher and Mr Richard Comer



Professor Lisa Gould, Department of Ophthalmology, University of Manitoba, Canada and Dr Charles Proxenos, Sydney Eye Hospital, Australia



Dr Jay Jun Lee and Dr Aaron Donnelly



Dr Sanushka Moodley and Mr Arthur Cummings

Eye Care in Focus Conference 2024

The annual Eye Care in Focus Conference, hosted by the Irish College of Ophthalmologists, took place on Tuesday, 1st October at The Gibson Hotel, Dublin.

The 1-day clinical education meeting is designed for the multidisciplinary eyecare team working across community and hospital care in Ireland.

It provides a unique opportunity for ophthalmologists, optometrists, orthoptists, ophthalmic nurses and technicians to come together to discuss current eye care pathways and developments, and facilitate a forum for shared learning across the disciplines.

The programme for the 2024 conference included dedicated sessions on paediatric ophthalmology, cataract and sustainability in eyecare with representation on the speakers panel across the multidisciplinary team. Delegates also heard an update on the strategy for eye care and service delivery developments with regards to the HSE National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology.

The conference was chaired by ICO President, Mr John Doris.

Cataract

North East Region Pathway

Opening the first clinical session, Mr Tim Fulcher, Consultant Ophthalmic

Surgeon at the Mater Hospital and Beaumont Hospital outlined the development of the cataract pathway in the North East and coordination of the integrated eye care team model in the region to reduce patient waiting times and improve service efficiency. Mr Fulcher's talk reviewed how the previous pathway had been operating and the changes that were implemented in order to standardise the process so that patients requiring surgery would be seen in a more timely manner and require less visits to hospital to complete their cataract journey.

The pathway was reviewed under five areas to highlight how the process improvements were made in terms of referrals, referral management, pre-op assessment, day of surgery and post-op clinic.

The consultation process began three years ago, bringing together a wide team of representatives from hospitals and community clinics in the region and the clinical disciplines,

including community ophthalmologists, optometrists and nurses, GP's, junior doctors and consultant ophthalmic surgeons along with hospital administration staff and HSE data analysts, to look at how to better integrated the service. A main outcome of this was the establishment of a governance group, the Virtual Accountable Care Organisation (VACO), with representation from both community and hospital clinical teams and management. This was to ensure broad input in how any proposed change would impact and improve the current process. Mr Fulcher stressed that by having 'everyone in the room' it also helped to identify potential downstream problems that may arise and how they could be addressed.

A previous audit of a thousand new patient referrals by the Mater Eye Department in recent years had identified that 30% of all the referrals were cataract related, a significant number of the workload through the department. It influenced the decision to start the pathway review process with cataract. The audit also showed that up to 30% of patients referred specifically for cataracts either don't want or don't need surgery, a significant waste of resources that needed to be tackled and which was blocking slots for more urgent cases.

The planned opening of the second dedicated cataract clinic at The Mater was another major factor for instigating the pathway review, in order to ensure the processes were improved and standardised to manage two busy theatres and to have more patients seen, essential to meeting patient demand for the procedure and tackle waiting lists.

The aim was also to ensure referrals were coming from optometrists who are able to provide more detailed and relevant information to the eye clinic in relation to current vision and eye history. GP representatives were consulted during this process, and



(l-r) Keynote speakers at the cataract clinical session, Dr Margaret Morgan, CHO7 and Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin, Ms Lisa McAnena and Mr Tim Fulcher, Mater Hospital and Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, Mr John Doris (chair), Ms Chriosa O'Connor, Clinical Optometrist, Mater Hospital and Ms Tania Constable, Clinical Optometrist, CHO7 and President, Optometry Ireland. Talks at the session outlined efficiencies and improvements to patient waiting times and care as a result of new cataract pathways in operation in Dublin North East (CHO9) and in Dublin South, Kildare and Wicklow (CHO7) regions.

acknowledged the role of optometrists as the primary eye care providers for this pathway. This ensured the process would be more streamlined for the patient. GP's expressed the need to be kept informed of their patients having surgery.

Following referral from the optometrist, the patient comes in once to the eye department where they are seen, diagnosed, have diagnostics done, discussed about surgery and the consent process and their next visit is for their surgery. Consequently, patients get listed for surgery quicker and the unit has a better visibility on the true demand for cataract surgery. Mr Fulcher noted that the unit does take into consideration cases where a second or subsequent visits for the patient is appropriate and required.

A number of rapid improvement events were held for the clinical team to reinforce standardising the process on the day of surgery, in terms of the patient's journey through the hospital and the post op pathway.

Standardised Referral Forms

For the referral rapid improvement event, the department set up a standardised optometry referral form, largely used within the North East Region now, along with a guide to assist with correct completion of the form in order to give clear communication on why the hospital needed all the elements of information for triaging of patients. Separate patient information booklets were developed for optometrists to give to their patients, so the patient feels more informed by the time they visit the eye department for their initial review appointment.

Given the demand for surgery, the Mater Eye Department has now given a vision threshold of 6/9 or more advanced for the referral protocol. If the patient's vision is better than 6/9, they ask the optometrist to provide a specific reason for referral. If the optometrist identifies the patient as 'urgent' on the form, the patient is then re-triaged by an ophthalmologist in the eye department and directly booked to the one stop clinic.

A cataract referral specific email of where to send the form was set up, which means these emails are automatically transferred into the cataract work list at the eye department.

The Mater has developed similar standardised referral forms for glaucoma and for macular degeneration, with the aim of creating consistency across the referral pathway between optometry and the hospital clinic.

In addition to medical eye health history, three key questions asked on the form to improve surgery listing efficiency at the unit:

1. Is the presence of the cataract impacting the patients quality of life (to address patients who declined surgery at their hospital visit on the basis that they were happy with their current vision).
2. Has the patient been informed of the nature of cataract surgery and given the patient information booklet.
3. Has the patient said they are willing to undergo cataract surgery if it's offered in the near future (to address those who may not feel ready for surgery and in light of the now reduced waiting time frame from referral to surgery).

Challenging Clinical Situations in Cataract Surgery

Ms Lisa McAnena, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon at the Mater and Beaumont Hospitals, delved into this area in greater detail, addressing not only the clinical challenges that arise in the context of cataract, but the wider barriers that can occur and how to preemptively address these. These include language and communication barriers, consent and reviewing whether a second visit for, and managing without an electronic medical record (EMR). Ms McAnena highlighted the importance of the multidisciplinary team to the cataract pathway, pre and post operative care that is delivered from optometrists and nurses.

Optometrist Led Post-op Cataract Clinic

Ms Chríosa O'Connor, Clinical Optometrist followed Ms McAnena's talk with an overview of the model of optometrist-led post-op cataract clinic in operation across the Mater Hospital and CHO9 in Dublin. She discussed the start up phase, the standard operating procedures (SOP),

competency and the challenges for the pathway as it extends out to the community in the absence of an EMR. Chríosa presented audit findings of how often optometrists in the post op cataract clinic have the input of doctors and how often it's just optometrists led.

In terms of the benefits of the pathway to date, it was highlighted that 85% of referrals to the Mater Eye Department are now coming from optometrists, 87% listed for surgery, and the unit has more than doubled their surgical sessions (66% increase in access to theatre and 220% increase in cataract numbers).

In addition, there has been a significant increase in the number of non cataract surgery due to process improvements. In the first 7 months of 2023, 890 cataract surgeries were performed and in 2024, nearly 1800 cataracts which show significant and sustainable improvements as a result of the new pathway processes.

CH07 Referral Pathways and Service

Dr Margaret Morgan, Consultant Ophthalmologist and Tania Constable, Clinical Optometrist and President of Optometry Ireland, outlined the current structure of the cataract service at CH07 (Dublin South, Kildare and Wicklow region), detailing how the service was initiated, the referral pathways now in place and the plans to refine the pathways to continually strive for the best service outcomes for patients.

It was highlighted during the presentation, that as waiting times improve in regions nationally where the new cataract pathway is in operation that there is a need for improved communication with GP's and optometrists, ensuring they are informed in these regions of the reduced waiting times. This is to help ensure patients are referred at the appropriate time and stage of cataract development relevant to the local listing wait time.

Ms Tania Constable, Clinical Optometrist, CH07 and President of Optometry Ireland followed Dr Morgan's talk with practical advice on how optometrists can improve their referrals to ensure that the right patients are seen in the cataract clinics and that they are prioritised according to their visual needs.

Paediatric Ophthalmology

Community Paediatric Ophthalmology (Policies, Procedures and Integrated Approach)

Dr Geraldine Comer, Consultant Ophthalmologist, University Hospital Galway opened the paediatric session with a comprehensive overview of the policies and procedures developed in the HSE CHO2West / Galway region to facilitate the development of a modernised integrated paediatric eye care pathway. The implementation of the new pathway has ensured children in the west are seen in a timely manner in the most appropriate setting through the management oversight of the integrated eye care team (consultant, community ophthalmic physician, optometrists, orthoptist, ophthalmic nurses and healthcare assistants).

Galway community service is now the first port of call for children's eye clinics. Waiting lists have been eliminated via the increased numbers of clinics, which was facilitated and enabled by developing clear policies and procedures.



(l-r) Keynote speakers at the Paediatric Ophthalmology clinical session Ms Tania Constable, Clinical Optometrist, CHO7 and President, Optometry Ireland, Dr Geraldine Comer, University Hospital Galway CHO2 West and Dr Christine Bourke, Children's Health Ireland at Temple Street and Crumlin Hospitals, Dublin.

Over 8's Scheme

In her presentation, Dr Comer also outlined the process and eligibility criteria for the HSE Over 8's Transfer Scheme, including the new HSE explanatory document and forms. The new criteria was implemented from

February 1st, 2024 following a 4 month review process in late 2023 in consultation with clinical optometrists in CHO West and the review of NHS guidelines. Communication with local optometrists was carried out during January of this year, ahead of the updated scheme's implementation

The scheme is available to children who will be 8 or older at their next timed ophthalmic reviews. Only children attending the scheme currently or who have been referred and deemed suitable are eligible for the scheme transfer. Only children who are deemed stable, no longer undergoing active management and require just a yearly refraction review should be transferred. An information pack for parents has also been developed which includes the letter of authorisation, the optometrist refund referral form, LOA/2 Form (yellow prescription form) and required direction to use within 180 days.

Retinopathy of Prematurity

Dr Christine Bourke, Paediatric Ophthalmology Clinical Fellow, Children's Health Ireland at Temple Street and Crumlin Hospitals, outlined the pathology and staging of retinopathy of prematurity followed by an outline of the new pathways and services developed at CHI for children with ROP, including links between tertiary and primary care. Dr Bourke also highlighted the pathology of other

eye conditions affecting premature children in the long term, namely cortical visual impairment (CVI) which is a commonly encountered condition. She is currently on Fellowship at CHI, having completed a Paediatric Ophthalmology Clinical Fellowship at Great Ormond Street Hospital in 2023/24 following her CCST award in Medical Ophthalmology from the ICO.

Person First: Assessing Vulnerable Adults with Additional Needs

Ms Tania Constable spoke to delegates about the considerations for adults with intellectual disabilities, who may have less contact with preventative services than the general population. Her presentation provided practical and empathetic guidance on how to assess and manage adults with additional needs in the community with the aim of improving access to eye care, also discussing alternative clinical testing, different communication approaches, and management strategies.

Update from the Clinical Lead for Ophthalmology

Ms Aoife Doyle, HSE Clinical Lead for the National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology and Consultant



(l-r) Ms Aoife Doyle, HSE National Clinical Lead for Ophthalmology and Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital and St James's Hospital, Dublin, Ms Cathriona Ennis, Director of Nursing, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin and Ms Sarah Spain, Senior Orthoptist, Health & Social Care Professions Lead for the National Clinical Programme in Ophthalmology.

Ophthalmic Surgeon, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH) and St James's Hospital, Dublin, provided a progress update on the strategy for eye care delivery and the developments in the specialty following the implementation of new integrated care pathways that have significantly reduced patient waiting times in cataract and paediatric ophthalmology.

Ms Doyle was joined on the panel by Ms Sarah Spain, Senior Orthoptist and Health and Social Care Professions

(HSCP) Orthoptist Lead for the Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology and Ms Cathriona Ennis, Director of Nursing, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital. They spoke to the audience about the development and support of the role of orthoptics, advanced and specialist nursing and a new ophthalmic technician grade as integral to the integrated eye care team.

Ms Cathriona Ennis, Director of Nursing, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin gave a talk on

'Supporting and Developing the Role of Nursing and Ophthalmic Technician' aimed at highlighting the unique skill set and role of the advanced nurse practitioner as part of the multidisciplinary team in delivering safe integrated ophthalmic care. Cathriona emphasised the importance of optimising the collective capability of the MDT so as to ensure the right patient gets seen at the right time in the right place by the right team member.

New HSCP Lead for the National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology

Ms Sarah Spain has recently been appointed as the Health & Social Care Professions Orthoptists Lead for the National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology. Sarah is currently working as a Senior Orthoptist in Roscommon. She outlines the priorities for the profession in her new role with the Clinical Programme



Ms Sarah Spain

"One of the main objectives of the HSCP lead role is to examine the difficulties in recruiting orthoptists to our health service. Other key objectives include reviewing the issues surrounding the training and retention of orthoptists in Ireland. Four key areas have been identified as current challenges for the orthoptic profession in the HSE: the shortage of orthoptists, lack of clinical placement sites, varied support for new graduate orthoptists, and a lack of career structure and workforce planning for the orthoptic profession in Ireland.

The difficulties in recruiting orthoptists within our health service has become increasingly pronounced due to the reduction in the number of Irish school leavers travelling to the UK to study orthoptics. This reduction

may have been contributed to by the reintroduction of fees for healthcare courses in UK universities. Fees to study Orthoptics are now £9,250 a year. Is an orthoptic degree course in Ireland now our only chance to ensure our future workforce supply requirements are met?"

We currently have only five accredited placement sites for orthoptic students from UK universities. Clinical placements are an opportunity for potential future workforce to network with employers and are an opportunity to showcase the development of ophthalmology services in Ireland thanks to the roll out of the new modernised care pathways.

Support for new graduate orthoptists varies across the public service, hindered in places by vacant senior orthoptic posts. New graduate orthoptists commencing work in Ireland without the support of senior orthoptists potentially needs to be approached in a more structured way. Preceptorship programmes provide structured support over a set time frame and help to support new graduates in their transition from university to working life. The use of preceptorship programmes currently varies across ophthalmology departments in Ireland.

The lack of career structure and workforce planning is a large piece of work that needs to be reviewed. Unlike

other HSCP's within the HSE, there is no pay scale for 'clinical specialist' orthoptists. There are clinical specialist pay scales for physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, dieticians, radiographers, chiropodists, and audiologists. We need to ensure that we are developing a workforce that meets the evolving needs of ophthalmology services and is fit for purpose for future service requirements. This should involve having HSCP's such as orthoptists working to the top of their skillset in specialist roles.

Currently in the HSE there are a number of orthoptists already working in extended roles in areas such as glaucoma, medical retina, stable pituitary clinics, and stable ocular toxicity clinics. These orthoptists have undertaken postgraduate study and clinical training to provide these services to patients who historically would have needed to see an ophthalmologist. This increases the capacity for us to see more patients, creates capacity in the ophthalmologist's clinics for more complex cases, and in turn reduces waiting times for acute care. There is however currently no recognition in terms of career progression for the orthoptists working in these extended roles, unlike the UK which has a clear career pathway. The lack of career progression opportunities creates difficulties in retaining staff and enticing orthoptists to work in Ireland, adding to our issue surrounding staff shortages.

The roll out of the new modernised care pathways has provided us with an ideal time to review these difficulties and challenges. We plan to examine potential ways to deal with these issues and hope to be in a place to make recommendations on potential solutions following this project."

How to Make Your Practice More Sustainable

Sustainability in Cataract Surgery

The sustainability session at this year's Eye Care in Focus Conference aimed to provide practical advice and steps eye care professionals can take in their clinics to help reduce their carbon footprint. It followed the focus on the topic at the ICO's Annual Conference in May, demonstrating the College's ongoing commitment to placing a spotlight and 'call to action' on the impact of the specialty's carbon footprint to the extended eye care team.

Dr Alison Greene, Surgical Trainee with the Irish College of Ophthalmologists, explained that she first developed an interest in sustainable healthcare while working in University Hospital Waterford during the establishment of their new high flow cataract unit in 2023.

Seventy one percent of the healthcare carbon footprint is from the manufacture, use or disposal of our supplies. Within ophthalmology cataract surgery is the number one procedure and surgery in Ireland and worldwide. As a surgery, this uses high energy consumption, is high volume with high consumable generation and complex waste generated, which all

contribute to a large carbon footprint.

Sustainable means 'lean' and effective use of resources, and Dr Greene gave examples of resource limited scenarios where clinics streamline to make the most of their resources. The Aravind Healthcare Group Eye Hospital in India was cited, where their low carbon eyecare system work has been extremely effective from a green perspective.

The HSE Climate Change Action plan, discussed during Dr Philip Crowley's talk at the ICO Annual Conference earlier this year, outlines the strategy to achieve a carbon neutral healthcare system in Ireland by 2050.

Dr Greene acknowledged it can be difficult when working as part of a large scale system organisation such as the HSE to know where to start as an individual as the scope and areas to tackle are broad and varied. Her advice is to examine 'your own space' and what you can control, suggesting a focus on the procurement of your clinic supplies in the cataract unit to aim for a greener model in that individual unit. This involves looking at the procurement of items, the contents of the cataract pack, the waste generated per case and how it is disposed of.

The European Society for Cataract and Refractive Surgeons provides

guidance on benchmarking for sustainable surgical cataract packs and the Sustainable Index for Disposables in Cataract Surgery (SIDICS), a very helpful and practical tool for evaluating the sustainability of customised cataract packs used by hospitals and surgical centres. The resources can be accessed for free on the ESCRS website to see how your clinic custom cataract pack compares to the benchmark recommendation and what can be done to reduce its CO2 footprint.

Among the recommendations to come from the sustainability action studies include the examination of procurement options, and where possible, to look locally for general surgical items (gloves, gowns etc) and also to opt for reusables in place of single use instruments, cups and trays and to use swabs and gauzes sparingly.

Recycling Initiative – Eye Theatre, University Hospital Waterford

In her talk, 'Recycling – It's the Simple Things' Ms Louise Doyle, Theatre Nurse at University Hospital Waterford, outlined her sustainability initiative now in place at the hospital eye theatres to make recycling more accessible and intuitive for healthcare staff.

Louise was prompted to take the initiative having witnessed poor habits and performance in relation to recycling in the theatre, mainly because it was not being made simple and also because staff are so busy. She highlighted that it works for people at home because it has been made convenient to do so through our domestic recycling bins and has become habit.

Louise initiated the practical measures necessary for effective recycling, to help mitigate the effects of plastics on our environment. This included adequate bin placement, with the correct bags, placed together, to encourage correct segregation.

Three separate bins, for risk waste, general waste, and recyclable waste are now used in the theatre setting

Education and guidance was necessary to achieve effective recycling. Louise developed new waste recycling education posters alongside the HSE Green Healthcare programme (www.greenhealthcare.ie) that are specific to the operating theatre. The



Mr John Doris, President, ICO (2nd right) with keynote speakers at the 'Making your Practice more Sustainable' session, Ms Louise Doyle, Theatre Nurse, University Hospital Waterford, Dr Alison Greene, SpR Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin, and Ms Helen Curran, Head of Sustainability, Specsavers UK/IRE.

posters have proved to be very effective, and are now being used in other hospital theatres and also being adapted to develop similar style posters for other clinical areas in the hospital setting.

Ms Helen Curran, Head of Sustainability at Specsavers Ireland & UK gave the final talk in the session on the *Simple Ways to Make Your Practice More Sustainable*. In her role Helen focuses on all aspects of sustainability, the planet, the communities we operate in and the people we employ. She examined the broader scope of what we mean by sustainability in eye care beyond carbon and energy - the wider view that focuses on the impact of climate change on people and the communities we operate in, and the impacts on healthcare.

The Role of Nutrition in Protecting Vision

The Evidence for Targeted Nutrition to Improve Visual Function

Guest speaker at this year's Eye Care in Focus conference, Prof John Nolan, Founder and Director of the Nutrition Research Centre Ireland (NRCI) at the South East Technological University (SETU) in Waterford, gave a comprehensive outline of the research and evidence for targeted nutrition to improve visual and cognitive function.

Professor Nolan, a Fulbright Scholar at the SETU established the Macular Pigment Research Group at the research centre, where scientists have spent twenty years studying the role of nutrition and lifestyle for human well-being.

In his talk, he explained how research has shown that high performance visual function associated with central



Prof John Nolan, Director of the Nutrition Research Centre Ireland (NRCI) at the South East Technological University, guest speaker at the ICO Eye Care in Focus Conference with meeting chair Mr John Doris.

vision is mediated by the macula through the accumulation of three key carotenoid nutritional pigments:

"Carotenoids are naturally occurring plant-based pigments. Humans consume circa 50 carotenoids from diet, with only 20 identified in the human body (in blood, and in fatty tissues and organs (for example the retina and brain). Carotenoids exhibit antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and absorptive properties.

Collectively, at this specialised tissue, three key pigments, lutein, zeaxanthin and meso-zeaxanthin, are referred to as macular pigment. This macular pigment is a biomarker of, and highly correlated with, brain carotenoid levels.

Researchers at the NRCI have tested and confirmed the impact of enrichment of these carotenoid pigments via supplementation on visual and cognitive preference in the healthy population, and in patients with age-related macular degeneration (AMD), the leading cause of blindness in the western world and Alzheimer's disease."

More recent studies at the research centre have investigated the link between nutrition and brain health and function. Over the last number of years Professor John Nolan and his team have published novel papers on how targeted nutrients enhance cognitive function for the general population and improve quality of life for patients suffering with Alzheimer's disease.

Before concluding his talk, Prof Nolan outlined the advanced stage plans for a New School of Optometry at South East Technological University in Waterford aimed at addressing the current training demand for the

profession in Ireland. In recent years, the HSE has established a hospital clinical optometrist grade, working as part of the new integrated eye care team model. The increased access to training opportunities in Ireland is a welcomed development for the continued roll out of extended eye care teams nationally.

The new degree course in Optometry at SETU is on course to start accepting the first successful applicants from 2027. The Dean of the new School of Optometry in Waterford is Dr Fraser C. Horn, College of Optometry at Pacific University, US and Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry who is currently working alongside Prof Nolan and all key stakeholders on the development of the programme at SETU.

Case Based Discussion



Dr Emer Doolan, Consultant Medical Ophthalmologist, CHO6, CHO7 and Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin is pictured with Mr John Doris at the 'ICO Eye Care in Focus Conference on October 1st at The Gibson Hotel, Dublin. Dr Doolan delivered a case based discussion during the clinical education conference for the multi disciplinary eyecare team.

The College has developed a new sustainability education resource on its members portal, aimed at sign posting resources and providing helpful advice and practical tips on ways to reduce the carbon footprint in ophthalmology.

Recording from the Sustainability in Eye Care and all key sessions at the Eye Care in Focus Conference 2024 are available for members to access via our secure members portal.

MPS Research Findings of Doctor Investigation Process

Findings of a survey in 2024 by the Medical Protection Society (MPS) highlighted the need for urgent reform on how the Medical Council investigates doctors, revealing the significant impact the investigation process is having on registrants' mental health.

MPS, who support 16,000 healthcare professionals in Ireland, has called on both the Medical Council and the Department of Health to take urgent steps to reduce the number of doctors who they state are needlessly dragged through this process, and resolve cases with more speed and compassion.

In the survey (published in June), of 114 practitioners who have been investigated by the Medical Council in the last five years, the findings showed:

- Nearly all of those responded (93%) said the Medical Council investigation caused stress and anxiety, 73% said it impacted on their health and wellbeing, 58% on their personal life.
- Almost 8 in 10 (77%) said the investigation had a detrimental impact on their mental health.
- The length of the investigation (70%), and the initial unexpected notification of the investigation (78%) impacted on doctors' mental wellbeing most.
- Over half (53%) said the tone of the communications from the Medical Council affected their mental health most.
- 1 in 10 (12%) of the respondents experienced suicidal thoughts at some time during their investigation.
- Nearly a quarter (24%) considered leaving the medical profession. 10% either left or retired early.

The MPS has proposed changes to four areas that have the largest impact on doctors going through regulatory investigations; communication, length of process, the handling of spurious or minor complaints and mental health and wellbeing throughout the process. For each of these areas, the MPS are

making recommendations to the Medical Council, and other bodies and organisations, for reform.

Medical Council 'CAREhub'

Commenting on the Medical Council's launch of CAREhub – an independent and confidential wellbeing support service support to doctors, medical students, and members of the public who are going through the Medical Council's regulatory process, Dr James Thorpe, Deputy Medical Director at

Medical Protection Society (MPS), said: "MPS supports doctors from the moment a Medical Council complaint is received through to its conclusion, and we see how the investigation takes its toll on the mental health of those involved.

Discussions with the Medical Council on our survey findings and recommendations have been positive from the outset, and the launch of CAREhub to provide independent wellbeing support to those facing this uniquely challenging process is a welcome and positive step. We hope to continue our constructive dialogue with the Medical Council and will do everything possible to help to bring about other improvements to this process."

A full overview of the MPS research findings and their recommendations and current actions can be found on the MPS website:

www.medicalprotection.org/ireland/about/our-policy-work/reports/imc-investigation

Diabetic RetinaScreen Conference 2024

'Innovating RetinaScreen for the Future'



Dr Mark James, Mr Robert Acheson, Miss Marie Hickey Dwyer, Professor Simon Harding and Professor David Keegan pictured at the Diabetic RetinaScreen Conference 2024 on Friday, 8th November Radisson Blu Royal Hotel, Golden Lane, Dublin 8.

The conference is designed to promote collaboration among all stakeholders, including ophthalmologists, diabetologists, public health physicians, academics, epidemiologists, optom-

etrists, graders, screeners, and nurses to explore the latest advances in diabetic retinal screening and treatment and the opportunity to learn, collaborate, and connect with peers in the field.