



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

# ICO NEWS

ISSUE 40

SUMMER 2025



## President's Message

Dear Colleagues,

It is a great privilege to address you in this summer edition of the ICO Newsletter as I begin my tenure as President. I would like to extend my thanks to John Doris for his leadership over the past two years and for championing key initiatives, particularly in sustainability both in terms of climate and careers in the specialty. Congratulations John.

This year's Annual Conference in Kilkenny was a resounding success. The auditorium remained full to the end, always an excellent sign of interest and engagement. A fantastic educational programme led by Professor Conor Murphy and the Scientific Committee welcomed world-class speakers including Professor Andrew Dick, whose Mooney Lecture was a masterclass in the evolving treatment of uveitis. Sessions on neuro-ophthalmology, genetics, anterior segment and the future of clinical practice highlighted the dynamic innovation within our specialty.

It was pleasing to get such positive feedback from the sponsors who were delighted how they had the opportunity to easily engage with the delegates. A special mention of thanks to Siobhan Kelly and College support staff for the outstanding work in organising the event which ran so smoothly.

Going forward we have challenges. Maintaining a high standard in the medical and surgical programmes is very important. I am delighted Emer Henry has taken over directorship of the medical programme and Clare McCloskey and Christine Goodchild the surgical programme. I know the programmes are in good hands. The sustainability of our profession and our professional lives cannot be taken for granted. The ICO will be continuing to keep these issues to the fore. Increasing costs is a constant challenge.

I look forward to working together with our members as we continue to advance and promote high standards of education and clinical standards in ophthalmology.

I wish you all a very enjoyable summer.

Warm regards,

**Gerry Fahy,**

President, Irish College of Ophthalmologists

## ICO Annual Conference 2025

The medieval city of Kilkenny was the destination for this year's ICO Annual Conference. The meeting took place at the Kilkenny Convention Centre, Lyrath Estate, from Wednesday, 21st May to Friday 23rd May, 2025. Over 250 delegates gathered for the three-day scientific programme. The ICO wishes to thank everyone who attended and hope that you thoroughly enjoyed the meeting.

The event is a highlight of the College's annual calendar, bringing together national and international experts, colleagues and trainees to share the latest knowledge and expertise in treating eye diseases.

Key symposia at this year's meeting included *General Retina and Genetics*, *Neuro-ophthalmology*, *Anterior Segment Surgery* and the *Development of Emergency Ophthalmology Services*.

Building upon the discussions from the ICO Winter Meeting in November, the conference featured a session on the *Future of Clinical Practice*. Additionally, a dedicated session on *Sustainability in Eye Care* highlighted

the College's ongoing commitment to prioritising this important issue. This session was led by the outgoing ICO President Mr John Doris, who championed this focus throughout his two-year term. John's presidency formally concluded at the ICO AGM on Friday, May 23rd, where Mr Gerry Fahy was presented with the Chain of Office, officially beginning his tenure as ICO President.

A *Top Ten Tips* session also featured on the programme, offering practical insights and advice from specialists in their respective areas of clinical expertise, including glaucoma, ocular surface disease, and cataract surgery. ➡



Mr Gerry Fahy, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Blackrock Health, Galway and incoming President of the Irish College of Ophthalmologists is pictured with Mr John Doris at the ICO Annual Conference Gala Dinner reception in Kilkenny. Mr. Fahy formally assumed the role of ICO President and received the chain of office at the College's AGM on Friday, 23 May.

➡ The eye specialists imparted their experiences in running a practice, offering tips on patient management and emphasising the importance of maintaining doctors' general well-being.

The ICO extends sincere thanks to all our guest speakers for their invaluable contribution to the success of this year's conference, and to everyone who presented papers and

poster research. We were once again delighted to receive a record number of submissions of the highest standard. Special thanks to Professor Conor Murphy and the members of the ICO Scientific and PCS Committee for planning a fantastic line-up of speakers and sessions at ICO Kilkenny 2025.

We look forward to planning next year's conference and to sharing the date and venue for ICO 2026 soon!

## Annual Mooney Lecture 2025

Evolution of Treatment Regimens for Uveitis

It was a great honour for the College to welcome Professor Andrew Dick – Duke Elder Chair and Director of Institute of Ophthalmology at University College London and Chair of Academic Unit of Ophthalmology, University of Bristol – to deliver the Annual Mooney Lecture 2025 at this year's conference.

Professor Dick's lecture entitled '*Evolution of Treatment Regimens for Uveitis*' explored the fundamental principles of ocular immunity and the immune compensatory mechanisms involved. He outlined the immunopathology that underpins intraocular inflammatory disease and how these insights have shaped current treatment strategies for uveitis.

Since 2016, Professor Dick has served as Director of UCL Institute of Ophthalmology and holds the prestigious Duke Elder Chair of

Ophthalmology. He is also co-Director of NIHR Biomedical Research Centre at Moorfields Eye Hospital and UCL Institute of Ophthalmology.

During his lecture, Professor Dick highlighted the significant advancements in the field, including the development of targeted disease taxonomies based on cellular and molecular mechanisms. Furthermore, he explored future possibilities, including targeted local gene therapy approaches, aiming to induce and maintain remission and achieve a steroid-free life for uveitis patients.

This captivating and comprehensive presentation was a true tour de force, offering immense educational value to our delegates. We look forward to welcoming Professor Dick back to Ireland in the near future to hear more about the ongoing innovations and the clinical impact for patients.

## Neuro-Ophthalmology Symposium

The Neuro-ophthalmology clinical symposium took place on the opening morning of the Annual Conference on Wednesday, 21st May.



Guest speakers Professor Steffan Hamman, Copenhagen and Professor Dan Milea, Paris.

The first of the session presentations was delivered by **Professor Steffan Hamann**, Consultant Neuro-ophthalmologist and Head of Visual Pathways Research Center (VIPER), Rigshospitalet in Copenhagen. Professor Hamann provided a comprehensive overview of the growing role of optical coherence tomography (OCT) in neuro-ophthalmology.

His talk examined the anatomical areas of interest within the retina and the optic nerve as well as the relevant OCT protocols that are used for the study of afferent visual pathway diseases, along with their benefits and limitations. Selected cases provided further practical and clinical perspective, and Professor Hamann concluded with a look to the future—highlighting the potential of AI-assisted OCT in diagnosing major brain diseases.

Professor Hamann's research focuses on compressive, inflammatory, and ischemic diseases of the afferent visual pathways, with a particular focus is on the pathology of elevated intracranial



Annual Mooney Lecturer 2025, Professor Andrew Dick (right), Duke Elder Chair & Director, Institute of Ophthalmology, University College London and Professor of Ophthalmology, University of Bristol, United Kingdom, is pictured with Mr John Doris, and Professor Conor Murphy, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin at the ICO Annual Conference in Kilkenny.



pressure states, ischemic and inflammatory optic neuropathies, and optic disc drusen. His research team are focused on advancing the use of retinal and optic nerve imaging modalities, particularly OCT, and integrating artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms, to improve neurological disease detection through ocular imaging.

In his talk 'Through the Eye into the Brain, using AI' **Professor Dan Milea**, Head of the Neuro-Ophthalmology Department at Rothschild Foundation Hospital in Paris, discussed the use and competencies of AI use in neuro-ophthalmology.

Prof Milea, who is also Head of the Rothschild BRAINLab (Building Research with Artificial Intelligence in Neuro-ophthalmology) in Paris, illustrated how AI algorithms have shown high accuracy in detecting papilledema, and holds promise for detecting a host of other diseases and neurological conditions. This is of high importance in the current context of ageing populations and Dr. Milea predicts AI will be increasingly used as a tool to assist neuro-ophthalmologists in diagnosing and managing patients in the future.

**Ms Áine NíMhéalóid**, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon at University Hospital Waterford, spoke to delegates about the management of patients with idiopathic intracranial hypertension (IIH), a condition that frequently presents to the ophthalmologist with a spectrum of disease severity, ranging from mild to fulminant cases.

Ms NíMhéalóid's talk explored the current research on traditional therapies such as acetazolamide and topiramate, as well as emerging treatment options including GLP-1 receptor agonists, bariatric surgery, and venous sinus stenting. The importance of a multidisciplinary approach was emphasised, in ensuring patients receive the highest standard of care.

**Ms Lisa McAnena**, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon at the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital and Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, presented on the "Ophthalmic Complications of Cerebral Venous Sinus Thrombosis". CVST can be a challenging diagnosis, Ms McAnena said, often resulting in raised intracranial pressure which,



Neuro-ophthalmology symposium guest speakers, ICO Annual Conference, Wednesday 21st May.

both acutely and chronically, can threaten vision. Visual impairment can also be the result of cerebral infarction/stroke and throughout her talk, Ms McAnena discussed case examples, mechanisms of vision loss and management in CVST, reinforcing

the need for greater awareness of this condition among physicians and ophthalmologists alike.

The session was chaired by Dr Duncan Rogers, Consultant Ophthalmologist at Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, Dublin .



Dr Duncan Rogers (chair), Consultant Ophthalmologist, CHO 9 and Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, Dublin, Ms Lisa McAnena, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Mater Misericordiae University Hospital and Beaumont Hospital, Dublin, Professor Steffen Hamann, Consultant Neuro-ophthalmologist, Department of Ophthalmology, Copenhagen University Hospital, Denmark, Ms Áine NíMhéalóid, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, University Hospital Waterford and Professor Dan Milea, Head, Neuro-Ophthalmology Department, Rothschild Foundation Hospital, Paris.



# Sustainability Symposium

The ICO Annual Conference 2025 continued its commitment to fostering sustainability in healthcare with a dedicated Sustainability symposium on the afternoon of Wednesday, 21st May.



*Pictured at the Sustainability symposium at Irish College of Ophthalmologists Annual Conference 2025 (21st - 23rd May) at Kilkenny Convention Centre, Lyrath Estate, Co Kilkenny were: Dr Anders Bolmstedt, Chair of Health Care Without Harm Europe, Sweden, Mr John Doris, President, Irish College of Ophthalmologists, Dr Emilie Mahon, RCSI Ophthalmology Tutor, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital and Mr Tommy Bracken, Strategic Advisor, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin.*

The session welcomed a panel of experts, including international guest Dr Anders Bolmstedt, Chair of Health Care Without Harm Europe (Sweden), Dr Emilie Mahon, RCSI Ophthalmology Tutor at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH), and Mr Tommy Bracken, Strategic Advisor at RVEEH.

The symposium focused on practical, actionable strategies to improve environmental sustainability within healthcare systems, showcasing successful initiatives both in Ireland and internationally.

**Dr Emilie Mahon** – who also spoke on this topic at the ICO Annual Conference in 2024 – presented her ongoing research on the carbon footprint of cataract surgery at RVEEH. She highlighted that cataract surgery, as the most frequently performed operation, presents a key opportunity to reduce emissions.

“By measuring the carbon emissions from cataract procedures and exploring how they can be minimised, we can better focus our efforts to meet the 2030 and 2050 net zero targets,” Dr Mahon said.

**Dr Anders Bolmstedt** delivered a compelling talk titled “Why and How to Reduce Harmful Chemicals in Healthcare.” He addressed the often-

overlooked presence of hazardous substances in clinical environments, many of which pose risks to both human health and the environment. Dr Bolmstedt outlined practical strategies to identify and phase out harmful chemicals from healthcare settings, contributing to safer, more sustainable care delivery.

**Mr Tommy Bracken** provided a local perspective with his presentation “The Sustainability Journey at the RVEEH,” outlining how the hospital has begun integrating sustainability into its operations. From reducing waste to introducing greener procurement practices, Mr Bracken shared key lessons learned and ongoing goals for the institution’s sustainability roadmap.

This symposium reaffirmed the Irish College of Ophthalmologists’ commitment to supporting its members in keeping sustainability firmly on the agenda. It provided attendees with real-world examples of impactful change and tools to begin or advance their own sustainability journeys within healthcare.

## Future of Practice



*Pictured at the 'Future of Practice' panel discussion at the Irish College of Ophthalmologists Annual Conference 2025 were: Mr John Doris, ICO President, and Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, University Hospital Waterford, Ms Niamh Collins, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Mater Private Hospital, Cork, Mr Richard Comer, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Bon Secours Hospital, Galway and Mr James O'Reilly, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, UPMC Aut Even Hospital, Kilkenny and Whitfield Hospital, Waterford.*



# European Society of Ophthalmology Lecture 2025

Management of Cataracts in Patients with Corneal Pathologies

Ms Sarah Moran, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon at Cork University Hospital and South Infirmity Victoria University Hospital, presented the European Society of Ophthalmology (SOE) Lecture 2025 at the ICO Annual Conference in Kilkenny.

After completing Higher Surgical Training in Ophthalmology in Ireland, Ms Moran was awarded the Richard Steevan's Scholarship, allowing her to pursue advanced training in anterior segment and corneal surgery in the prestigious Rothschild Foundation in Paris.

Since her appointment in Cork in 2019, she has played a key role in developing the regional corneal service and is actively involved in teaching and training future ophthalmologists.

Ms Moran's lecture, entitled "Management of Cataracts in Patients with Corneal Pathologies," addressed the complex intersection of cataract and corneal disease, highlighting the challenges that coexisting corneal pathologies present in cataract surgery. She provided an expert overview of

diagnostic considerations, surgical planning, and intraoperative decision-making aimed at optimising visual outcomes in these patients. With corneal abnormalities frequently encountered in cataract patients, her insights were of high relevance and practical value to attending ophthalmologists, reinforcing the importance of tailored approaches in achieving the best possible patient care.

Founded in 1956, the European Society of Ophthalmology (SOE) promotes ophthalmology and collaboration among ophthalmologists and national societies across Europe. It includes representation from all 40 European countries, including the Irish College of Ophthalmologists.

Now in its 11th year, the SOE Lecture at the ICO Annual Conference



*Ms Sarah Moran, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Cork University Hospital and South Infirmity Victoria University Hospital, who delivered the European Society of Ophthalmology (SOE) Lecture 2025 at the ICO Annual Conference, is pictured with Mr John Doris, and Ms Janice Brady, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Waterford University Hospital.*

recognised a young ophthalmologist in their first 5 years of practice. Professor Louise O'Toole, Ireland's current representative on the SOE Board (2024-2027), introduced Ms Moran's lecture in Kilkenny.

## Top Ten Tips Session



*Pictured at the 'Top Ten Tips' session at Irish College of Ophthalmologists Annual Conference 2025 (21st - 23rd May) at Kilkenny Convention Centre, Lyrath Estate, Co Kilkenny were: Mr Paul O'Brien, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Blackrock Clinic, Dublin; Ms Janice Brady, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Waterford University Hospital; Ms Nikolina Budimlija, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Institute of Eye Surgery Clinic, Waterford and Kildare; Miss Yvonne Delaney, Consultant Ophthalmologist, Mater Private Hospital, Dublin, and Mr David Wallace, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Bon Secours, Kerry.*

# General Retina and Genetics Symposium

A highly engaging General Retina and Genetics symposium took place as part of the ICO Annual Conference 2025, chaired by Mr Paul Connell. The session featured a distinguished panel of guest speakers: Dr Jose Pulido, Wills Eye Hospital, Philadelphia, Miss Miriam Minihan, Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London, and Mr Paul Kenna, Director of the Ocular Genetics Unit at Trinity College Dublin and Clinical Lecturer at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin.

**Dr. Jose Pulido** shared insights from his extensive research that has focused on vitreoretinal infectious and inflammatory diseases, retinal degeneration, stem cells, checkpoint inhibitors, and immunotherapies. Currently serving as Director of the Henry and Corrine Bower Memorial Laboratories for Translational Medicine at the Vickie and Jack Farber Vision Research Center, Wills Eye Hospital, Dr Pulido shared progress from his pioneering work developing a Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (VSV)-based vaccine for the treatment of metastatic uveal melanoma. His lecture highlighted the potential of translational medicine in driving novel therapies for ocular disease through the convergence of immunology, virology, and oncology.

**Miss Miriam Minihan** presented on “*Retinal Detachment Outcomes*” encompassing an overview of the vitreoretinal department at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London and evolving strategies in the management of acute rhegmatogenous retinal detachment (RD). Miss Minihan described the department’s methods of auditing RD outcomes and the change in assessment that has evolved over the years,

“The urgency of the management of macula on retinal detachment is well known but there is a growing body of evidence globally that modern RD repair surgery for RD Macula off leads to a reduced level of success and visual outcome if not repaired urgently. In an age of small-gauge vitrectomy with higher cut rates and wide-angle

viewing systems, surgical success rates in many institutions continue to improve. The adage of ‘time is retina’ should encompass all acute RDs.”

Miss Minihan’s talk emphasised the importance of vitreoretinal surgeons advocating for their patients by ensuring that their operating lists have the capacity to perform RD repair surgery for Moff-RDs within 2-3 days of diagnosis. She addressed the difficulty, in practice, in providing timely surgery and said further studies of a prospective and randomised nature, with a control arm, would be beneficial to give a higher level of evidence to what many vitreoretinal surgeons already anecdotally believe and try to adopt in their practice.

The closing presentation of the symposium was delivered by **Mr. Paul Kenna**, Director of the Ocular Genetics Unit at TCD and Clinical Lecturer in Ophthalmic Genetics at the Research Foundation of the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital Dublin.

Mr Kenna delivered an inspiring address tracing the remarkable four-decade journey of innovation in Inherited Retinal Disease (IRD) research. From the discovery of the first IRD gene in 1989 to the first Irish patient receiving sight-restoring gene therapy (Luxturna) in March 2025 – performed by Mr Max Treacy at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital – Mr Kenna celebrated the transformational impact of genetic research in ophthalmology.

Mr Kenna highlighted how the patient experience after four decades of research and innovation now means;

- The genetic cause is now known for circa 70% of patients.
- Treatment is now available for one form of IRD (RPE65 Leber Congenital Amaurosis).
- Dedicated genetic eye disease services are now available and most



*Pictured at the General Retina and Genetics symposium at the Irish College of Ophthalmologists Annual Conference 2025, Dr Jose Pulido, Director of the Henry and Corrine Bower Memorial Laboratories for Translational Medicine in the Vickie and Jack Farber Vision Research Center at Wills Eye Hospital, Philadelphia; Mr Paul Connell, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, Dublin; Mr John Doris, President, ICO; Mr Paul Kenna, Director of the Ocular Genetics Unit, Trinity College Dublin and Clinical Lecturer in Ophthalmic Genetics Research Foundation of the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital Dublin, and Miss Miriam Minihan, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, London.*



patients can avail of genetic counselling.

- Computer based technologies that have also helped transform the lives of persons living with vision impairment.

At the conclusion of his talk, Mr Kenna announced his retirement, marking the

end of a distinguished career dedicated to advancing ocular genetic research. Reflecting on the progress made since the beginning of his journey, he expressed deep optimism for the future of patients with Inherited Retinal Diseases, noting the extraordinary strides in genetic understanding,

diagnostics, and treatment options now available.

The Irish College of Ophthalmologists extends its warmest congratulations and sincere gratitude to Mr Kenna for his outstanding contribution to ocular genetics research and his lasting legacy in the field.

## ICO Medal Awards – Annual Conference 2025

### William Wilde Medal 2025 for Best Poster

Christopher Sweeney, a 3rd Year Medical Student at University College Cork, was awarded the Sir William Wilde Medal for Best Poster Presentation at the ICO Annual Conference 2025.

His winning poster, titled *"The Preparedness of Ophthalmologists to Manage an Anaphylactic Reaction Post Fluorescein Angiography,"* explored the readiness of ophthalmic physicians to respond to a rare but life-threatening complication of intravenous fluorescein angiography.

Outlining the premise of his study, Christopher explained that while anaphylaxis in this context is uncommon, prompt recognition and immediate intervention are critical to prevent fatal outcomes.

Using a questionnaire-based approach, his research assessed

ophthalmologists' competency in managing such emergencies. The findings revealed a gap in training and preparedness, highlighting the need for targeted education and emergency response training to enhance patient safety.

### Barbara Knox Medal 2025 for Best Paper

Dr Brian Woods, Ophthalmology Specialist Registrar and Irish Clinical Academic Training (ICAT) Fellow, was awarded the Barbara Knox Medal for the Best Paper presentation at the ICO Annual Conference 2025.

Dr Woods paper, titled *"Automated Retinal Vessel Analysis Reveals Early Treatment Effects of Acetazolamide in Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension"* presented findings from a study using an automated retinal vessel measurement technique to detect and quantify

vascular changes following treatment with Acetazolamide (ACZ).

Acetazolamide (ACZ) lowers cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) pressure and reduces retinal venule diameter in individuals with idiopathic intracranial hypertension (IIH).

The study analysed fundus images from 165 IIH patients enrolled in a randomised clinical trial, who received either ACZ or placebo alongside weight management.

Results demonstrated that after six months, those treated with ACZ showed a significantly greater reduction in venule diameter ( $-2.15\mu\text{m}$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) compared to the placebo group ( $-1.39\mu\text{m}$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). ACZ-treated participants also experienced an arteriolar diameter increase at two months ( $5.02\mu\text{m}$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) versus placebo ( $2.8\mu\text{m}$ ,  $p = 0.14$ ).

Dr Woods concluded that response to ACZ can be detected and quantified in patients with IIH via automated analysis of retinal vasculature.



Christopher Sweeney, 3rd Year Medical Student at University College Cork and recipient of the Sir William Wilde Medal for Best Poster Presentation at the ICO Annual Conference 2025, is pictured with Mr John Doris, President of the Irish College of Ophthalmologists, and Professor Conor Murphy, Chair of the ICO Scientific Committee.



Guest speakers at ICO 2025 Kilkenny, Mr Felipe Dhawahir-Scala (left) and Mr Leon Au (right), Manchester Royal Eye Hospital, pictured with Mr John Doris.

# ICO Annual Confer



*Professor Conor Murphy, Dr John Traynor, Dr Dharm Pandeya, Mr Richard Comer, Mr Eddie Dervan and Professor Colm O'Brien*



*Ms Lisa McAnena and Mr Ian Flitcroft*



*Dr Garry and Dr Rosemary Treacy, Colleen Howe and Dr Jose Pulido*



*Dr Abdul Al Abri and Dr Patrick Canning*



*Mr Paul O'Brien, Dr Muirin Tempny and Mr Tim Fulcher*



*Professor Dara Kilmartin, Dr Maureen Hillery and Dr Kevin Tempny*



# ence 2025

Gala Dinner,  
21 May, Kilkenny



*Mr John Ferris, Gloucestershire Eye Unit, and Mr Eric Newcott*



*Dr Alan Hopkins, Dr Caoimhe Normile, Dr Robert McGrath, Dr Eimear O'Leary and Dr Jay Jun Lee*



*Dr Margaret Morgan and Tommy Bracken, Strategic Advisor, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital*



*Ms Janice Brady and Mr John Doris*



*Mr Jim O'Reilly, Ms Susan FitzSimon and Dr Aziz Rehman*



*Dr Evelyn Fox, Dr Emily Greenan and Dr Rebecca Fels*



*Dr Emer Henry and Ms Aoife Doyle*

## Workshops: ICO Annual Conference 2025

### Update from the National Clinical Programme in Ophthalmology and Diabetic RetinaScreen

At the ICO Annual Conference on Thursday, 22nd May, Ms Aoife Doyle, National Clinical Lead for Ophthalmology, was joined by Professor David Keegan, Clinical Director of Diabetic Retina Screen and Ms Helen Kavanagh, Diabetic RetinaScreen Programme Director for a workshop updating ICO members on the latest developments in both programmes.

The workshops offered an important forum for members to engage directly with the National Leads, allowing for discussion and clarification of pressing questions following their presentations.

Ms Aoife Doyle provided an update on the National Clinical Programme for Ophthalmology and developments in the wider health service, including referral pathways and the plans for the national electronic health record.

Ms Helen Kavanagh outlined the key milestones of the Diabetic RetinaScreen programme since its inception in Ireland in 2013. She detailed the programme's expansion, including the introduction of digital surveillance and a two-yearly screening pathway launched in 2021, as well as the nationwide pregnancy screening pathway initiated in June 2023.

Ms Kavanagh also discussed challenges to patient participation and

the strategic measures being implemented to enhance engagement and uptake. These efforts focus on improving communication strategies and addressing psychosocial and cultural barriers to effectively reach

underserved populations. The programme is also committed to developing patient-centred management expertise across screening, primary, and secondary care settings for diabetic eye disease.



*Professor David Keegan, Clinical Director of Diabetic RetinaScreen, is pictured with Ms Helen Kavanagh, Diabetic RetinaScreen Programme Director and Ms Aoife Doyle, National Clinical Lead for Ophthalmology, at a workshop session during the ICO Annual Conference.*

## Workshop: Helping to have Clear Consultations with your Patients

Dr Mary McCaffrey, Senior Medical Advisor with the Medical Protection Society (MPS), facilitated a workshop at the ICO conference in Kilkenny focused on enhancing communication with patients through the MPS C.L.E.A.R.<sup>®</sup> model. This model promotes key risk-reducing communication skills to improve patient interactions and safety.

Dr McCaffrey, who currently serves as Deputy Coroner for Cork City, brings extensive clinical experience from her long tenure as a Consultant Obstetrician and Gynaecologist at Kerry University Hospital (1998–2023). She was a former assistant master at the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin, during which time she worked at the IVF unit

and the sexual assault treatment unit and has lectured in obstetrics and gynaecology at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland.

During the workshop, Dr McCaffrey emphasised practical measures to reduce the risk of complaints and claims by improving communication and managing patient expectations effectively. She highlighted crucial aspects of patient-centred consultations, including the importance

of making a strong first impression, conveying genuine empathy, setting realistic expectations, and proactively addressing patient concerns.

In her role as Senior Medical Advisor for the MPS, Dr McCaffrey brings her expertise and experience of the healthcare system to help support and advocate for doctors in Ireland, building on the support framework MPS has long provided to their members.



*Dr Mary McCaffrey, Senior Medical Advisor, Medical Protection Society; Deputy Coroner for Cork City.*



## Anterior Segment Surgery Symposium

The Anterior Segment Surgery symposium held on Friday, 23rd May, featured expert insights on corneal care from the perspectives of glaucoma, oculoplastics, and corneal specialists: Mr Leon Au, Manchester Royal Eye Hospital, Mr Daniel Ezra, Moorfields Eye Hospital, London, and Mr Barry Quill, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital.

**Mr Leon Au** opened the session with his talk *"Combined Corneal and Glaucoma Management"* examining cases where cornea and glaucoma disease coexist in patients. He highlighted the effects of glaucoma treatments on the ocular surface, the critical need for endothelial protection during glaucoma surgery, and strategies for managing post-keratoplasty glaucoma.

**Mr Barry Quill** provided a comprehensive update on corneal transplantation trends and tissue retrieval in Ireland, comparing these with international data. He shared progress on re-establishing an Irish eye bank, a project he has been involved in for the past eight years.

While Ireland's transplantation rates are improving and aligning closer to UK and US standards in more recent years,



*Mr Leon Au, presenting at the Anterior Segment Surgery Symposium, Friday 23rd May, ICO Annual Conference*

significant gaps remain. In 2023, Ireland performed 53 transplants per million population (PMP), compared to 250 PMP in the US, 70 PMP in the UK, and 100 PMP in Italy and Germany. Encouragingly, figures for advanced procedures like DALK and DMEK are converging with UK rates.

Among the strategic recommendations to help Ireland increase its numbers that Mr Quill outlined include greater greater public and stakeholder awareness through donor campaigns, the re-development of Ireland's national eye bank, an examination of our transplantation rates and the setting of national targets which aim for leading nation standards.

The final talk by **Mr Daniel Ezra**, *"Blame the Blink? Eyelid Dynamics and the Ocular Surface,"* explored the influence of eyelid movement on dry eye. He discussed blink dynamics after eyelid surgery, the role of Orbicularis contraction in meibomian gland dysfunction, frictional anterior segment diseases, and the impact of lid wiper abnormalities post-surgery and in floppy eyelid syndrome.



*Keynote speakers at the Anterior Segment Surgery symposium, Friday, 23rd May at the ICO Annual Conference, Mr Barry Quill, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin; Mr Leon Au, Consultant Ophthalmologist, Manchester Royal Eye Hospital, Mr Daniel Ezra, Consultant Surgeon, Moorfields Eye Hospital, London and session chair Professor Conor Murphy, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital.*

## Publication of ICO Annual Report 2024

Irish College of Ophthalmologists Chief Executive, Ms Siobhan Kelly pictured with Mr John Doris, outgoing President, ICO and Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon, University Hospital Waterford, at the official publication of the ICO Annual Report 2024 at College's Annual Conference in Kilkenny (21-23 May, 2025).

The Annual Report provides an update on our activities and finances for 2024, in line with our responsibilities under the Charities Governance Code and the requirements of the Charities Regulator.

The Annual Report can be downloaded on the ICO website or by logging in to the ICO members portal and visiting the members section / Annual Reports.



# Patients, health professionals and lawyers unite to urge Government to implement pre-action protocols

The Irish College of Ophthalmologists is among a group of 14 organisations representing patients, doctors and dentists as well as legal firms in Ireland, who have united to urge the new Government to reduce the human and financial costs associated with clinical negligence claims, by taking the final steps needed to implement pre-action protocols.

A letter sent (May 9th, 2025) to the Minister for Health, Jennifer Carroll MacNeill and the Minister for Justice, Jim O'Callaghan, was coordinated by the Medical Protection Society and signed by Patients for Patient Safety Ireland, Irish Patients Association, Patient Empowerment, Irish College of General Practitioners, Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, College of Anaesthesiologists of Ireland, Irish College of Ophthalmologists, Association of Anaesthetists, Irish Dental Association, Irish Dental Hygienists Association, Hayes Solicitors LLP, Carson McDowell and Matheson LLP.

It stated that the protracted claims system 'adds insult to injury' for patients whilst also impacting negatively on healthcare professionals' mental wellbeing.

The slow process is also leading to high legal costs. Medical Protection Society data shows that a claim in Ireland takes just over four years (1462 days) on average to resolve, which is 56% longer than in Hong Kong (940 days), the UK (939 days) and

Singapore (938 days). The average legal cost for a claim in Ireland - €34,646 - is 191% more expensive than in the UK, 26% more expensive than in Singapore and 56% more expensive than in Malaysia.

The letter stated that pre-action protocols - a set of guidelines, laid out through legislation, which explain the conduct and steps a court expects parties to take before claims proceedings can commence - would go some way towards fixing a system that does not currently benefit anyone involved, and called on the Government to take the final steps needed to implement them, relieving needless suffering for all concerned.

The protocols would offer guidelines on how people in dispute should act before it reaches the court. They are expected to bring in more mediation and settlements, and reduce the delays for everyone involved.

The signed letter said, "When something goes wrong, it is a difficult decision to seek legal redress. As well as the personal and financial risk, patients

face a protracted claims system which is overburdened, deeply traumatic and adds insult to injury. Our legal system should seek to mitigate further harm to patients and families.

For the healthcare professionals involved, the claims process is described as having a profound emotional and psychological impact resulting in anxiety, depression and for some, the consideration of ending their clinical career or even suicidal thoughts.

A protracted process without clear, standardised routes for early information sharing also leads to increased legal costs. This can impact all parties, as well as having an onward impact on the amount of public finances otherwise better invested in the provision of high-quality healthcare."

The delivery of pre-action protocols is long overdue and has been a commitment of successive Ministers for both Justice and Health departments. The provisions already exist in section 219 of the Legal Services (Regulation) Act 2015."

## ICO Annual Conference 5KM Run



We were very fortunate once again with the timing of this year's conference, enjoying beautiful sunshine throughout the three days in Kilkenny! Congratulations to our delegates who set the alarm early to take part in the 5km organised run on the Lyrath Estate grounds!

A big thank you to David Wallace and Alan Hopkins for coordinating the run, and to BVI Medical for generously sponsoring a travel bursary worth €800 for the first runner home.

The run has become a firm fixture on our ICO conference programme in recent years, alongside the opportunity for a round of golf. Keen golfers took full advantage of the stunning fairways at Mount Juliet during their downtime, enjoying blue skies and breathtaking scenery.



# Professional Competence - New Requirements and Portal Launch 2025

Changes to the PCS requirements were introduced from May 1st 2025 and a new PCS portal for doctors to log their CPD activity was launched on the same date.

All doctors who hold Specialist, General or Supervised registration with the Medical Council and practise for more than 30 days a year in Ireland, are legally obliged to enrol in a Professional Competence Scheme (PCS) and meet the requirements set by the Medical Council. This involves engaging in CPD activity, and recording/retaining supporting documentation relating to your CPD activities.

The ICO operates the Professional Competence Scheme for doctors practicing as ophthalmologists who are registered with the Irish Medical Council. The ICO supports enrolled doctors in achieving, maintaining and developing their professional competence.

The Professional Competence Scheme year runs from May 1 to April 30.

## Activating your Account on the New PCS Portal

All existing users will be able to use their existing username (your email address), however the account must be activated at first sign-in. A step-by-step 'How To' guide for signing up to the

new portal is available on the ICO website:  
[www.eyedoctors.ie/members/professionalcompetence](http://www.eyedoctors.ie/members/professionalcompetence)

## Changes to the PCS Requirements from May 1st, 2025

Doctors must engage in and record a minimum of 50 points of CPD activity per year, made up as follows:

- Planning CPD – 5 CPD credits
- Audit / Quality Improvement Project / Practice Review – 10 CPD credits
- Work-based Learning – minimum 15 CPD credits
- Accredited Continuing Education – minimum 20 CPD credits
- Assign all eight Domains of Good Professional Practice at least once in every 3 years

PCS requires year-on-year compliance; there is no mechanism to 'carry forward' credits or competence from year to year.

Further information and links to guidance published by the Irish Medical Council and Royal College of

Surgeon on the changes implemented are available on the College's website [www.eyedoctors.ie](http://www.eyedoctors.ie)

If members have any queries or need assistance with the new portal, the ICO staff are here to help.

## CPD-SS: Continuous Professional Development Support Scheme

The HSE provides funding for the Continuing Professional Development – Support Scheme (CPD-SS) for Non-Consultant Hospital Doctors (NCHDs), working in the public health service, who are not on a formal training programme or who are not on the specialist register, to help them pay for attending activities that accrue External CPD points. The scheme only provides for educational / training activities undertaken in any of the Irish Training Bodies.

Registrations for the academic year 2025-2026 will open mid-July 2025. Enrolment via the online ICO CPD SS Application Form will be made available on the ICO website [www.eyedoctors.ie](http://www.eyedoctors.ie)



## Eye Healthcare: A 90 Year History of Progress

*Mr Paddy Condon, author of Eye Healthcare: A 90 Year History of Progress is pictured with Ms Nikolina Budimljija, Miss Marie Hickey Dwyer and Dr Alison Blake at the Annual Conference in Kilkenny. It was our great pleasure to also share copies of the late Mr John Nolan's book Irish Eyes: A History of Irish Ophthalmology and Related Events with our members at the conference.*

## The British Emergency Eye Care Society: The New Era of Emergency Ophthalmology

The College was delighted to welcome Mr Felipe Dhawahir-Scala, current President of the British Emergency Eye Care Society (BEECS), who spoke to delegates on Friday 23rd May about the development of emergency ophthalmology over the past decade. He outlined the UK's model for addressing this previously under-resourced and under-prioritised area of ophthalmic service delivery.

The origins of this progress trace back to the first joint Emergency Eye Department meeting in 2013, which

led to the formation of BEECS. The society aims to unite all Emergency Eye Departments across the UK, promoting and enhancing standards of excellence in emergency eye care for patients.

In 2016, Emergency Ophthalmology was officially recognised as a subspecialty by the Royal College of Ophthalmologists, and from 2024, it has been included in the RCOphth training programme curriculum, reflecting the increasing importance and formalisation of this vital field.



*Mr Felipe Dhawahir-Scala, Consultant Ophthalmic and Vitreoretinal Surgeon and Director of the Acute Ophthalmic Services, Manchester Royal Eye Hospital, pictured at the Irish College of Ophthalmologists Annual Conference at Kilkenny Convention Centre, Lyrath Estate during his presentation on "The British Emergency Eye Care Society: The New Era of Emergency Ophthalmology" on Friday, 23rd May.*

## Advancing Medical Ophthalmology Practice Annual Meeting 2025

The annual *Advancing Medical Ophthalmology Practice* meeting was held in Sheraton Hotel, Athlone, on the 4th and 5th April, 2025. The meeting was coordinated and co-chaired by Dr Fiona Harney and Dr Michelle Coffey.

The event is aimed at medical ophthalmologists, community ophthalmic physicians, and trainees undertaking basic and higher specialist training in Medical Ophthalmology in Ireland.

The educational programme includes a mixture of presentations and case study-based workshops. Presentations covered a range of topics across sub speciality disease areas, from current research to practical challenges in the community vs hospital setting. This also addressed specific topics of

interest to medical ophthalmology community practice as highlighted in feedback from previous events.

Guest speakers included Mrs Joanna Liput, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon at York Teaching and Harrogate Hospitals who discussed "*Challenging convention in the medical management of Glaucoma*" and Mr Susmito Biswas, Consultant Paediatric Ophthalmologist and Clinical Lead for Paediatric Service at the Manchester Royal Eye Hospital who gave a presentation on "VKC

management: current best practices and clinical insights".

Talks were also delivered by Dr Duncan Rogers (Perils and Pitting in the investigation and management of Uveitis), Dr Emer Doolan (Pachychoroid spectrum disorder), Ms Nikolina Budimlija's (How lifestyle choices affect our eyes: what our patients need to know) and Mr Brendan Cummings (An update on keratoconus from making an early diagnosis to navigating Tx options).





# Opening of New Cataract Theatre at Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital

The Dr Kathleen Lynn Cataract Unit at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH) was officially opened on the 12th June by the Minister for Health Jennifer Carroll MacNeill TD.

The theatre, which will greatly improve access to cataract surgery for patients across Ireland, is named in honour of Dr. Kathleen Lynn, a pioneering Irish physician, activist, and the hospital's first female doctor, appointed in 1910.

The new facility, which includes the addition of a second cataract theatre, will increase the number of cataract surgeries performed annually from 4,300 to 6,000. This will result in the hospital meeting the Sláintecare target of 50% of patients waiting less than 12 weeks for their procedure.

Most of the patients having surgery in the cataract unit are initially seen in the community and only attend the hospital on the day of surgery. Their postoperative care is also delivered in the community.

Mr. Donal Brosnahan, Clinical Director, RVEEH, said: "We dedicate this unit to Dr. Kathleen Lynn, whose values of innovation, compassion, and justice continue to inspire us daily. The theatre will help us to meet rising demand while ensuring our patients continue to receive the highest standards of

surgical excellence. It will also add to the clinical training we provide to our surgical trainees"

Speaking at the opening, Minister for Health Jennifer Carroll MacNeill T.D., said: "The Dr. Kathleen Lynn Cataract Unit reflects our healthcare goals: greater access, shorter waiting times,

and clinical excellence. I am proud to open this cataract theatre today to support the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear in delivering vital services that swiftly enhance patients' quality of life."

Dr. Kathleen Lynn (1874–1955) was a pioneering Irish doctor, political activist, and social reformer. One of the first women to graduate in medicine from University College Dublin, she became the first female doctor at RVEEH. In 1919, she co-founded Saint Ultan's Children's Hospital, providing essential care to Dublin's most vulnerable children. A suffragist and nationalist, she served as Chief Medical Officer during the 1916 Rising and was later elected a Sinn Féin TD. Her legacy lives on in Irish medicine and public life.



Danny Byrne, Dublin City Councillor, James O'Donoghue, President of Council RVEEH, Donal Brosnahan, Clinical Director RVEEH, Vivienne McGovern, PA to the CEO RVEEH, Barbara Lewandowska, ANP RVEEH, Deirdre Corroon, CNM RVEEH, Minister for Health Jennifer Carroll MacNeill TD, Cathriona Ennis, Director of Nursing RVEEH, Donal Hutchinson, Project Manager RVEEH, Jo Kearney, Assistant Director of Nursing RVEEH, Caroline Delahunty, Chief Operations Officer RVEEH, Orlagh Lyons, Finance Department RVEEH, Aisling Heffernan, IHA Manager, Dublin South and Wicklow.



# ICO Annual Conference 2025

Gala Dinner,  
21 May, Kilkenny



*Ms Aine Ni Mhealoid and Miss Yvonne Delaney*



*Ms Siobhan Kelly and Professor Colm O'Brien*



*Dr Geraldine Comer, Dr Alison Blake and Dr Mary Jo Eustace*



*Catherine O'Brien, Claire Dowling, ECLO and Laura O'Donnell, Clinical Nurse, University Hospital Galway*



*Dr Richard Farnan and Laura O'Donnell, Clinical Nurse, University Hospital Galway*



*Ms Aoife Doyle, Mr Behrooz Golchin, Dr Aziz Rehman, Dr Maureen Hillery and Dr Kevin Tempany*