

Independent Practice of the Year

A flair for the personal touch alongside modern facilities and an excellent local community network secured this year's award for Robinson Optometrists

Husband and wife team Nigel and Judith Robinson (pictured) started their optometric practice in Monkseaton back in 1991. Once established, they moved to much larger premises in 2007. It is here that they have established themselves not only as a centre of excellent clinical provision, but also, with a number of novel aspects that impressed the judges, have maintained a personal touch that has helped to differentiate them from the crowd.

The practice is fitted with an array of the latest imaging and examination equipment, from headset indirect ophthalmoscopes, retinal camera and visual field analysers and frequency doubling technology, through to electronic dispensing equipment. Interestingly, the premises are shared with two other services. The face2face Medical Aesthetics Clinic allows patients to consult with a consultant oculoplastics specialist ophthalmologist who, as well as providing some support for the general clinic, works alongside a physician to provide a variety of facial cosmetic procedures. This has certainly facilitated links with local ophthalmology and so helped patient referral and management pathways. Another clinic employs a chartered physiotherapist (who also works for Newcastle United) who is able to offer treatments for sports injuries, arthritic problems and so on. The judges were very impressed by the integrated nature of the services offered.

What really helped the Robinsons

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE OF THE YEAR

● **Winner** N and J Robinson Optometrists, Whitley Bay

● **Shortlisted**

M Procter Optician, Harrogate
Specs Direct, High Barnet
Corry & Christie, Aberdeen
Mongey Opticians, Castlebar
Observatory the Opticians, Muswell Hill



The Independent Practice of the Year, sponsored by Hoya, was collected by principals Nicholas and Judith Robinson



stand out from the other entries were the lengths they had gone to to establish their practice within the local community. A cubist painting representing a 'model in eyewear', commissioned from a local artist decks the wall of the practice, while classical music plays over the sound system, helping the patients to relax. On open evenings the Robinsons aim to develop local links and encourage people to find out more about them and the services offered, with live entertainment on hand.

Such differentiation has helped them, in their own words, 'stay out of the price wars' and establish themselves as a model of eye care

provision in an individual and professional environment.

'We show independence in the way we support our local community. We have been sponsors of local tennis clubs, golf club, pantomime societies, charities, churches and schools. For us this is a great pleasure but also elevates our position within the community. Recently we were instrumental as a business in achieving Lawn Tennis Association funding for a local tennis club to receive new playing surfaces.' All of this helps justify the Robinsons' feeling that they now run 'a practice in which we feel we can justifiably be proud'. The judges agree. ●