

Sex, drugs and non-tols

In its busiest programme to date, this year's Specsavers' PAC Conference upped the ante by squeezing nearly 50 hours' worth of learning into one day. **Elizabeth Lumb, Phil Hall, Tony Douglas** and **Nigel Best** summarise useful learning points from the day

Optometric track

Bill Harvey (*Optician*) launched proceedings in the main hall by refreshing the audience on the innervation and examination of the pupil with his talk on 'The pupil – into the void', providing videos of examination techniques demonstrating the relative afferent pupil defect. He explained that careful technique was paramount in being able to identify the subtleties of this vital test.

Learning points

- Ensure that the pen torch has a narrow beam spread to make accurate observations of pupil reactions
- For conditions such as retrobulbar neuritis, the observation of an RAPD can be diagnostic
- Maintenance of near reflex in association with a loss of direct reflex is important in the diagnosis of Argyll-Robertson pupil.

Solicitors **Hannah Pilkington** and **Laura Smith**, from legal firm Berrymans Lace Mawer, presented on the complaints process and how to avoid a complaint escalating.

Learning points

- Take any complaints seriously and deal with them well from the outset
- Keep and maintain a complaints file and for telephone conversations, make a note of the date, time of call and what was said



College of Optometrists president Dr Cindy Tromans



Teifi James: the prevalence of syphilis is on the increase



Solicitors Hannah Pilkington and Laura Smith

- Avoid complaints by effective communication and records you can rely on.

College of Optometrists president **Dr Cindy Tromans** outlined the wide-ranging drug groups that can have an effect on the eye and detailed the commonly reported symptoms to watch out for. She said optometrists were well placed to recognise these adverse events and reminded the audience of how and what to report in the yellow card scheme.

Learning points

- Optometrists are well placed to see and report ocular adverse drug reactions
- Online yellow card reporting is the easiest way to report an adverse drug reaction. (www.yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk).

Leon Au (Manchester Royal Eye Hospital) gave a guided tour of the eye and systematically outlined the specific ocular emergencies that could affect each structure, accompanied by a host of grisly pictures from the casualty department. He also reminded practitioners that contact lenses were implicated in the vast majority of microbial keratitis cases.

Learning points

- Common sites for foreign bodies are under the eyelid
- The presence of tobacco dust in patients requires urgent referral as it is indicative of a retinal tear or break, even if not confirmed on mydriatic ophthalmoscopy.

In his lecture 'A sight for sore eyes', **Jeff Kwartz** (Manchester) reminded delegates that dry eye symptoms are incredibly common, yet some patients suffer in silence even though treatment options are much improved.

Learning points

- Diagnoses of systemic conditions presenting with ocular manifestations are often easier when you look at the patient as a whole. Dermatological conditions such as rosacea are easier to identify away from the slit lamp
- Children can commonly present with adenovirus conjunctivitis which is extremely contagious. Care must be taken to prevent the spread of infection to other patients
- Dry eye is the most common cause of ocular soreness and, where traditional management strategies have failed to control the symptoms, referral to an ophthalmologist is indicated.

Teifi James' (Halifax) talk 'Sexy eyes' tackled the history and prevalence of some of the more commonly encountered sexually transmitted diseases including chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV/AIDS. The prevalence of syphilis is on the increase as a result of the introduction of better treatments for HIV and AIDS. This has relevance for



Nigel Best: the DO and diabetes

optometrists because syphilis has ocular manifestations ranging from iritis to conjunctivitis and optic neuritis to nerve palsies.

Learning points

- STDs that commonly feature ocular involvement are chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis and HIV/AIDS
- Chlamydia can cause conjunctivitis and Reiter's syndrome (iritis, episcleritis)
- Syphilis can cause almost any ocular condition from iritis to corneal infiltrates to optic neuritis.

Dispensing track

Paul McCarthy's (Anglia Ruskin University) lecture 'It shouldn't happen to a dispensing optician' consisted of a number of interesting case studies which McCarthy had encountered in his 30-year dispensing career.

Learning points

- Check optical centres on all current spectacles with a prescription >3 dioptres prior to dispensing their new ones
- Some patients will not tolerate prism thinning in their varifocals. This may be due to the upward displacement of the image which results
- If prism is prescribed for near only and a multifocal is preferred, discuss with the optometrist whether working prism over the entire lens may be acceptable.

Optometrist **Nigel Best**, in 'Diabetes – what the DO needs to know', discussed the two main types of diabetes before describing how the disease affects the eye.

Learning points

- To minimise the effect of diabetes on



Leon Au: guide to ocular emergencies

the ocular structures, optimum blood sugar control should be emphasised to diabetic patients at every opportunity

- Diabetic retinopathy is now the leading cause of new, severe visual impairment registrations in the UK in the 22-74-year-old age group.

Further highlights included an informative outline of refractive errors in children by **Andrew Keirl**, and a look at low vision practice by **Stephen Golding**.

Contact lens track

Dr Clare O'Donnell (Optegra) discussed fitting the irregular cornea in high street practice, with handy tips for the non-specialist.

Learning point

- Do not be afraid to learn new skills

and offer a more specialist contact lens if you feel comfortable in doing so.

Caroline Christie (City University) updated delegates on the latest in dry eye management.

Learning points

- Do not recommend baby shampoo for lid scrubs due to the damage it does to the lipid layer in your tears, but instead recommend one of the many excellent commercial products available on the market today.

Bill Harvey's entertaining 'Pick a number' picture-based quiz flagged up 16 pictures of various conditions of the anterior eye.

Learning points

- Look for evidence of anterior chamber activity with any suspect corneal lesion as its presence would suggest immediate referral was appropriate
- Xanthelasmata are a key indicator of systemic hyperlipidaemia whereas recent studies suggest arcus is not
- Always use an orange Wratten-style absorption filter in unison with the blue excitation slit lamp filter if you want to see staining adequately.

This year's PAC Conference also saw its very first audiology programme, attended by nearly 100 Specsavers hearing aid dispensers and trainees. Along with industry stands, sessions for pre-registration optometrists and trainee DOs, and several interactive workshops, this was a conference with something for everyone. ●



Next year's PAC Conference will be on Sunday October 14, again at the ICC in Birmingham