

optometry scotland

25th October 2005

Press Release – EMBARGOED UNTIL 10AM 26TH OCTOBER 2005

Attention: News editors and political/health correspondents

Optometry Scotland Welcomes Review of Eyecare Services Interim Report

Optometry Scotland (OS) is a member of the Review of Eyecare Services working group and warmly welcomes this Interim Report.

The most important aspects of this report are recommendations to develop;

- ❑ an eyecare service in Scotland which integrates primary and secondary eyecare with social services
- ❑ a patient centred approach to eyecare delivery
- ❑ redesigned services to meet the needs of the patient
- ❑ rapid local access to an appropriately qualified eyecare professional
- ❑ convenient and flexible appointment times
- ❑ improved outcomes for many patients due to the earlier detection of sight threatening disease
- ❑ a reduced reliance on the hospital eye service for the treatment/management of many common eye disorders, leading to more effective use of specialist services
- ❑ improved communication between providers and patients
- ❑ direct referral by community optometrists to the acute sector

The incidence of eyecare problems increases considerably with age, and demographic projections show that with an increasing average age of population and greater numbers of older people, demand for eyecare services will rise substantially in the next 10-15 years.

General Practitioners often do not have the equipment or experience to diagnose eye conditions and ophthalmology and demands on the hospital services are high. Too much time is spent on routine appointments that could be discharged to community optometry.

The proposed expansion in the role of the Optometrist recognises the level of education, training, practical skills and equipment already existing in community optometric practice. The SEHD believe the NHS should capitalise on this resource

and the new NHS Eye Examination will allow access to this improved level of primary eyecare to everyone in Scotland.

The routine use in Optometrists' practices of automated visual field testing machines, indirect slit lamp biomicroscopy, and contact eye pressure tests, paves the way for Optometrists to see many patients who would otherwise need to go to hospital, or who currently attend hospital, e.g. for routine glaucoma tests.

The early diagnosis and treatment of eye problems the improvement and prioritisation of appropriate referrals to hospital, and the development of integrated care networks between Primary, Secondary and Social Care are key points that will lead to better delivery of eyecare services in Scotland.

The CCI Ophthalmology eyecare pathways form an integral part of this Interim report and it is essential that Health Boards recognise the value of keeping patients in the community wherever possible. NHS Boards are encouraged to pilot the new pathways and adapt for local circumstances. A number of pilots are already underway.

Ends

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