



Irish College of
Ophthalmologists
Eye Doctors of Ireland
Protecting your Vision

Newsletter

ISSUE 19

WINTER 2017

Message from the President

Dear Members,

Welcome to our latest edition. I look forward to meeting many of you at our forthcoming ICO Winter Meeting. The clinical session on anterior segment focuses on aggressive conjunctival conditions, dermatology and glaucoma in this context. We will also hear from the HSE with regard to the roll out of an IT system to support integration of community and hospital care. I have recently met with the Minister for Health Simon Harris, his Department colleagues and the HSE to discuss the progress of the Primary Eye Care Review and the Winter meeting will give me the opportunity to talk with you about the status of the report and to hear your opinions and concerns.

I recently attended a Medical Council seminar which brought together representatives from across the Post Graduate Training Bodies and other agencies to discuss a number of proposals for future developments in the professional competence scheme.

I would like to remind you all of your Professional Competence Scheme obligations and encourage you to both attend and record CPD activity. I would also like to thank our colleagues who arrange meetings around the country throughout the year. Their efforts are much appreciated by us all. Should you need support and guidance on the PCS process College staff are more than happy to help you get everything up to date. Whatever question you may have, you will not be the first person to ask it! The automatic uploading of points from ICO meetings is still in its infancy. It will make life easier but if there are hiccups, let the office know and please be patient with the process.

This newsletter reports on the achievements of many of our younger colleagues. Congratulations to Rory Murphy on receiving the ICO/Novartis Eye Research Bursary 2017-18, announced at the 9th



Annual Adare Retinal meeting. In this edition, the recipients of the 2016 Bayer / ICO Clinical Fellowship, Elizabeth McElnea and Andrea Ryan give an update on their Fellowship programmes. Elizabeth and Stephen Farrell are also recipients of the HSE's Dr Richard Steevens Scholarship for overseas fellowship training. I encourage all of our trainees to compete for both College and external bursaries.

Congratulations to Claire Quigley on receiving the 2017 John Henahan Prize, awarded by Eurotimes. I would also like to commend her on her involvement in the SOE Young Ophthalmologists programme.

Louise Hendrick has recently been appointed as the HSE Lead for NCHDs. This is a very important and busy role and I wish her well in her endeavours.

As we enter a new century of the Montgomery lecture, it will be my pleasure to introduce Prof Michael O'Keeffe as this year's lecturer. Michael has made a significant contribution to Irish ophthalmology during his career and I am looking forward to celebrating with him on November 24th.

With best wishes
DR ALISON BLAKE

9th Annual Adare Retinal Meeting



Pictured at the 9th Adare Retinal Meeting, which took place on September 28th in the Dunraven Arms Hotel, Limerick, were meeting co-ordinator Marie Hickey Dwyer, Doreen Curran, Novartis Ireland and Alison Blake. The meeting included an excellent presentation from guest speaker Ian Flitcroft on the management of myopia and a most helpful and practical session from Dara Kilmartin on difficult cases in ophthalmology. The extensive programme also featured an update on treatment for proliferative diabetic retinopathy, guidelines for the management of DME and the efficiency of ocriplasmin in the treatment of VMT. More on the Adare Retinal Meeting on page 8.



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If you would like to make any suggestions for future issues of the College Newsletter please contact **Siobhan on** siobhan.kelly@eyedoctors.ie

Public Urged to 'See the Whole Picture' During AMD Awareness Week

This year marks the 10th Anniversary of AMD Awareness Week (September 25th-30th). The ICO continues to support the initiative, alongside other eye health organisations in order to create greater public understanding of AMD, and encourage those aged 50 and over to have their eyes tested regularly.

The concept behind the 2017 campaign theme 'See the Whole Picture' was to create a narrative about life with AMD with real people telling their story.

The launch event took place in the National Gallery of Ireland on Monday September 25th with a portrait exhibition from celebrated Irish photographer Barry McCall.

The focus was to capture each individual's passion as seen through their eyes, to show how AMD has impacted on their life. The images show the progression from the early stages of the condition, blurred or wavy vision, through to the advanced stages. The striking visuals served as a reminder to the public to get their eyes tested regularly, to ensure they 'See the Whole Picture'.

Thanks to Mark Cahill, Marie

Hickey Dwyer and all our members who gave their time during the week to participate in radio and media interviews.



Miriam O'Callaghan, Photographer Barry McCall and Loretto Callaghan, Novartis Ireland pictured at the AMD Awareness Week launch event in the National Gallery of Ireland.



L-r Siobhan Kelly, Elaine Howley and Sally McEllistrim, NCBI, Lynda McGivney Nolan, AOI, Chris White, NCBI, Kevin Whelan and Amanda Kenny, Fighting Blindness, Miriam O'Callaghan, Mark Cahill, Doreen Curran and Loretto Callaghan, Novartis

ICO WINTER MEETING

The Irish College of Ophthalmologists Winter Meeting takes place on Friday, 24th November at the Chartered Accountants House on Pearse Street in Dublin.

The clinical session at this year's meeting looks at 'Skin to Disc' linking dermatology, the ocular surface and glaucoma.

Prof Frank Powell, Consultant Dermatologist at the Mater Hospital and the Charles Institute of Dermatology in UCD will talk about new developments in acne rosacea. Prof Powell will be followed by Billy Power who will discuss rosacea and other skin conditions that have conjunctival and corneal effect. Aoife Doyle will talk on the management of glaucoma in the context of those challenges.

We will also hear from Niall Synott, HSE Assistant National Director in Information Technology and Gregory Johnson, HSE Programme Lead for e-referrals with regard to the roll out of a robust IT system and electronic patient record (EPR) to support integration of community and hospital care. Gerry Kelliher, statistician with the National Surgery Programme will talk about the data that is currently collected by the HSE and how that data influences decision making.

The development of integrated care pathways will involve sending patient data, including photographs, to multiple locations, and a proven, robust IT system

will be needed instead of a paper-based system in all locations participating in the pathway. The implementation of an EPR is essential in order to facilitate the treatment of patients in the community, so that all those involved in treating the patient can view the section of the patient's records necessary for their role in the eye care pathway.

The proposals from the Ophthalmology Clinical Programme and the recommendations from the Primary Eye Services Review group are in line with all of the major health policy positions of this Government. During the recent 2018 budget announcements Minister for Health Simon Harris reaffirmed the Government's commitment to "shifting the model of healthcare towards a more comprehensive and accessible primary care service in order to deliver better care close to home in communities across the country."

The Winter Meeting presentations will give an opportunity to discuss in more detail the next steps that must be taken to implement the appropriate IT infrastructure and software.

The RAMI meeting will follow after lunch in the same venue, the Institute of Chartered Accountants on Pearse Street.

Montgomery Lecture 2017

The ICO is delighted to announce that the 2017 Montgomery Lecture will be delivered by Professor Michael O'Keeffe on the



evening of Friday, November 24th in Trinity College. The title of Professor O'Keeffe's lecture is "The Evolution of Paediatric Cataract Surgery".

Professor O'Keeffe has been an outstanding and influential figure in the ophthalmic field both here in Ireland and abroad throughout his career. The ICO is honoured to invite him to deliver this year's lecture in recognition of his significant contribution to the specialty and paediatric ophthalmology in particular.

Professor O'Keeffe's lecture will discuss classification, surgical technique, complications and recent advances to improve visual outcomes in paediatric cataract surgery. In an overview, Prof. O'Keeffe said childhood cataracts account for 10% of all blindness worldwide and are an important cause of lifelong visual impairment. Successful outcomes require early diagnosis prompt referral, surgical intervention, prompt visual rehabilitation and treatment of amblyopia.

Although paediatric eyes differ from adults, Prof O'Keeffe will outline how the advent of phaco emulsification has changed surgical approach to childhood cataracts. Many obstacles remain such as eye growth, management of Aphakia and glaucoma. However, advances in pharmacology, surgical technique, contact lenses and a better understanding of glaucoma should improve outcomes.

A pre-lecture drinks reception will commence at 6pm, with the Lecture scheduled to begin at 6.30pm.

Sightsavers Ireland



From left to right; Jim Miley Sightsavers Ireland Chairman, Daragh Fahey Director of Quality Safety & Risk Management, Tallaght Hospital, and Dr. Imran Khan Sightsavers Chief Global Technical Lead at Sightsavers' recent event in Powerscourt. The information evening demonstrated Sightsavers work to develop costs efficient and sustainable eye health interventions that transform lives. Dr. Imran Khan discussed the critical nature of partnerships with local governments in developing cost-effective approaches that can be scaled up and replicated, and the support Sightsavers provide in the training of eye health professionals to deliver quality, affordable services.

European Society of Ophthalmology Young Ophthalmologists

by Claire Quigley

The biennial European Society of Ophthalmology (SOE) meeting took place in Barcelona, on June 10th-13th, 2017. The meeting was preceded by the European University Professors of Ophthalmology course, which this year focused on anterior segment disease. The didactic course included a lecture from Prof. Conor Murphy of the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital, Dublin, on the topic of meibomian gland dysfunction.

The SOE meeting included the first ever election of the SOE young ophthalmologists (YO) committee, which, inspired by the American Academy of Ophthalmology (AAO) YO, was established in 2009 to serve the collective needs of YOs in Europe. YOs are defined as ophthalmologists in training, or in their first five years of independent practice. In the Barcelona meeting the SOE YO organised a separate track specifically focused on relevant topics for YOs, including surgical videos, dry labs, and popular sessions such as; "Top Tips on Making the Most of Training Opportunities in Europe", "Training opportunities in the UK for European YOs post Brexit", and "Essential Surgical Skills – Top Tips for Young Ophthalmologists".

Beyond their meeting, which will be held again in Nice in 2019, the SOE has several activities relevant to YOs. The SOE organise travel grants for Eastern European YOs to visit ophthalmic centres in Europe, and on their website there are archives of video presentations from prior congresses, and a database of some of the fellowships available across Europe, which is being updated on an ongoing basis. There will also be a biannual newsletter, focusing on subjects relevant to YOs.

The latest newsletter from the SOE YO was released on September 1st. It recaps the SOE 2017 congress, looks forward to some other upcoming meetings, and highlights some of the aims of the current SOE YO chair, Marie Louise Rasmussen. Among her keynote projects are support for national YO groups, which could enhance awareness about education



Davit Shahmazaryan and Aida Hajjar pictured at the biennial European Society of Ophthalmology (SOE) meeting in Barcelona, June 10th-13th, 2017.

and improve the standards of training. Aims of the Irish College of Ophthalmologists at present include to develop a YO-friendly session at the next ICO annual meeting. At the SOE YO meeting I volunteered to represent YOs in Ireland, taking over the role from Max Treacy and Ghaleb El-Farouki, and I will also contribute to the society newsletter.

If you would like to contact Clare about the SOE YO please email quigleyclare@gmail.com

Training & Retaining Ophthalmologists

As both a training and professional body, the College has an important remit in actively engaging with all of the Institutions across the health service, to ensure that the best medical graduates continue to be attracted to the specialty and most importantly that the specialist skills of our trained ophthalmologists are retained in Ireland and that a career in ophthalmology in this country is a rewarding experience.

To ensure that the guidance given to policy makers is evidence based, the ICO is carrying out research to examine why Doctors choose to specialise as Ophthalmologists and what issues in specialty practice influence whether they stay working as ophthalmologists through-out their medical careers. The research further aims to understand; why trained ophthalmologists are not taking up consultant posts or community posts or in some cases not staying in those posts through-out their careers?

While there is significant demand for ophthalmology services with long waiting lists, many posts, particularly those in the community are currently unfilled. A greater understanding of the lived experience of doctors in the specialty of ophthalmology, both during training and in practice, will enable the College to advise the HSE on the impact of the issues identified on the work force and the implications for future planning.

During November a survey is being circulated to ophthalmologists in practice and in training as part of this research project. The survey responses are anonymised and your contribution to the project is very important, please do take part.

ICO Trainee Winner of 2017 John Henahan Prize

Congratulations to Clare Quigley, a trainee at the Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, who was announced the winner of the 2017 John Henahan Prize by EuroTimes at the Video Awards Session on the 8th October.

Clare's winning essay was on the topic of *'How does commercial interest affect my career'*. The Henahan prize is named in honour of John Henahan, who edited EuroTimes from 1996 to 2001 and whose work has inspired a generation of young doctors and journalists.

Clare received a travel bursary worth €1,000 to attend the XXXV Congress of the ESCRS, and a special trophy was presented to her at the Video Awards Session.

Emanuel Rosen, chief medical editor of EuroTimes and chairman of the judging panel, said all the submissions were of the highest quality, making selection of a winner extremely difficult.

"The shortlisted essays were published in EuroTimes, and anybody who read them will see what a difficult decision the judges had to make. But in the end, there could be

only one winner, and Dr Clare Quigley is a very worthy recipient of the 2017 John Henahan Prize," he said.

The judging panel also included Thomas Kohnen, chairman of the ESCRS Publications Committee, José Güell, former president of the ESCRS and Oliver Findl, chairman of the ESCRS Young Ophthalmologists Committee.

On winning the Prize, Clare said "Writing for the John Henahan Prize was a rewarding experience – my medical writing has thus far been scientific, and ordered into abstract-friendly sections. It was engaging to write in a less restricted way about commercial interests, which we all encounter. It's an honour to have my essay chosen for the prize, and I'm especially delighted as I very much enjoy writing, of scientific and other varieties."



Claire Quigley, recipient of the John Henahan Prize 2017.

Winner of ICO/Novartis Eye Research Bursary 2017

Rory Murphy was announced the winner of the ICO/Novartis Eye Research Bursary 2017-18 at the Annual Adare Retinal Meeting in September. His research which focuses on novel therapeutic pathways in the treatment of glaucoma is being carried out between the facilities at University College Dublin and The Catherine McAuley Research Centre, Mater Misericordiae University Hospital, under the supervision of Prof. Colm O'Brien.

Explaining the project rationale, Rory said, "Our study focuses on preventing sight loss in glaucoma, the leading cause of irreversible blindness globally. Unmyelinated retinal ganglion cells, which form the optic nerve, exit the eye posteriorly through a mesh-like porous structure called the lamina cribrosa. In glaucoma, fibrosis causes maladaptive, structural remodelling of the lamina cribrosa, resulting in nerve cell death and subsequent sight loss. Our preliminary

work has involved developing a novel 3D biomimetic Lamina Cribrosa scaffold for in-vitro use, to closely resemble the natural cellular micro-environment in-vivo. Using altered scaffold stiffness as a stimulus for pro-fibrotic cellular activation, we will determine the ability to inhibit mechanotransduction of matrix stiffness, reducing subsequent profibrotic epigenetic alterations and preventing the ultimate structural remodelling and sight loss seen in

glaucomatous neuropathy. These inhibitors could offer a novel and completely different therapeutic option in glaucoma management from the current, but often inadequate, gold standard of reducing intraocular pressure. I am most grateful to both Novartis and the Irish College of Ophthalmology for the opportunity to conduct this research."

Now in its 6th consecutive year, the annual ICO/Novartis Research Bursary is an unrestricted educational grant awarded to a doctor who wishes to undertake a research project or specific training in the field of ophthalmology. The bursary has been instrumental in facilitating eye doctors in Ireland to undertake pioneering research into potential cures and treatments for sight-threatening conditions.

Medical Ophthalmology Sub Specialty Day

The 3rd Medical Ophthalmology Sub Specialty Day entitled 'Practical OCT', chaired by Fiona Kearns, was held on the 15th September in the Learning Centre at the Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital.

Frank Kinsella opened the meeting with an informative and practical approach to interpretation and management of Macular OCT followed by a question and answer session.

This was followed by a demonstration session from Fergal Byron, Topcon and John Walsh, MED on their respective OCT's, showing the scope and many uses of OCT in clinical practice.



Demonstration of an OCT machine.



Maureen Hillary and Sacha Hutchinson



Sheena Creaven and Marie Sweeney



Alison Blake and Susan Mullaney



Siobhan Kelly and Emer Doolin



Dharm Pandeya, Caroline Gardiner and Rashid Nahar

Re-configured Ophthalmology Training Pathway announced at Medical Careers Day 2017

The ICO formally announced details of the new training pathway for Medical and Surgical Ophthalmology at the Annual Medical Careers Day. This day is organised by the Forum of Irish Postgraduate Medical Training Bodies and was held in Dublin Castle on Saturday, 23rd September.

From July 2018, a reconfiguration of the existing accredited programme in the form of two separate training pathways, one for medical ophthalmology and one for surgical ophthalmology, will be implemented. The new training pathway for Medical Ophthalmology continues to place priority on subspecialty expertise in the areas of paediatrics, glaucoma and

medical retina. A main aim of the stand-alone programme is to deliver the required Medical Ophthalmologists workforce needed to respond to the current and future patient demand.

Dean of Postgraduate Education, Yvonne Delaney gave a presentation to interns and final year medical students and facilitated a round-table discussion at the careers clinic session, a new

feature to the event this year which allowed delegates designated time with a Consultant from their chosen specialist field to ask further questions. The College would like to thank Yvonne and Sarah Gilmore for their participation and time at the event.

The ICO was also invited to present on the new training pathway in ophthalmology at a number of Intern career events at the various Intern Networks, including the Mid West Network, UCD and TCD.



Siobhan Kelly and Alison Blake pictured with medical students Diane Kelly, Eleanor Morris and Chloe McDermott at the Medical Careers Day 2017 in Dublin Castle.



Yvonne Delaney pictured with Medical Students, Amy O'Regan, Niall Byrne, Jocelyn IP and Mohammad Bajilan.

ICO to host Royal College of Ophthalmologists Exam

The ICO is delighted to announce that trainees on the Irish ophthalmology programme will be able to sit the Royal College of Ophthalmologists Part 1 FRCOphth exam in Dublin as of January 2018. Prior to this, the exam was taken by our trainees in London. The exam is mandatory for trainees on the Irish programme and having Dublin as a location will make it significantly easier for our trainees to sit. We are especially delighted to work with our colleagues in the Royal College and look forward to the further collaborations between our two Colleges.

The ICO also welcomes the recent decision by the RCOphth Exams Committee that as of October 2017, interns are now eligible to sit the Part 1 FRCOphth exam.

The dates for the 2018 exam are Monday, 15th January, Tuesday, 8th May and Monday 1st October.

9th Annual Adare Retinal Meeting

The 9th Adare Retinal Meeting, coordinated by Marie Hickey-Dwyer, took place on September 28th in the Dunraven Arms Hotel, Limerick.

The extensive programme of talks attracted an audience of ophthalmologists from all over the country, from trainee to those in practice. Following the meeting, Marie Hickey-Dwyer said she was delighted to see so many people present, and that the spread from NCHD to practicing ophthalmologists was a key ingredient to its success with great audience engagement and participation each year.

Marie paid tribute to all those who spoke. In particular she mentioned Ian Flitcroft, who gave a presentation on the active management of myopia. Ian is currently coordinating a large European study on myopia, which we congratulate him on and wish him every success with.

In an excellent and most practical presentation, Dara Kilmartin examined a selection of difficult cases and scenarios that ophthalmologists may have to deal with. This was followed by robust audience discussion and provided a helpful platform for delegates to explore such scenarios and hear expert opinions and advice from colleagues.

The programme of talks also included updates on the treatment of proliferative diabetic retinopathy, guidelines for the management of DME, vitreous haemorrhage, hydroxychloroquine maculopathy and the efficiency of ocriplasmin in the treatment of VMT.

The Teaching Faculty was Frank Kinsella, Marie Hickey-Dwyer, Dara Kilmartin, Patricia Quinlan, Catherine Cleary, Eamonn O'Connell and Robert Acheson. They facilitated an excellent interactive component to this year's Adare meeting.



Declan O'Brien, Robert Acheson, Eamonn O'Connell, Robert King Hall



Margaret Pierse, Marie Hickey Dwyer, Katherina Tobin



Ian Flitcroft, Catherine Cleary, Patricia Quinlan, Eamonn O'Connell, Dara Kilmartin, Marie Hickey Dwyer, Robert Acheson, Frank Kinsella

Report on UEMS Section of Ophthalmology Plenary Session – Santorini, Greece June 2017

by Alison Blake

The 71st Plenary Session of the UEMS Section of Ophthalmology was held in Santorini, Greece, 17th-18th June 2017.

The Union of European Medical Specialists is an EU wide representative body liaising with the EU Commission divided into sections by specialty. UEMS represents over 1.6 million medical specialists in all the different specialties. It also has strong links and relations with European Institutions (Commission and Parliament), the other independent European Medical Organisations and the European Medical / Scientific Societies. The UEMS has 39 Specialist Sections, which represent independently recognised specialties. They each created a European Board as a subgroup, in conjunction with the relevant European Society, with a view to defining European standards of medical education and training.

They also contribute to the work of Multidisciplinary Joint Committees (MJC) which address fields of a multidisciplinary nature. The Section of Ophthalmology encompasses the European Board of Ophthalmology which awards the EBO Diploma.

The current President is Hank Bonnemaier from The Netherlands, who will be in the role for a four-year term. Our own Denise Curtin is the General Secretary and the Treasurer is Eija Vesti from Finland.

Accounts are held in Brussels and the annual accounts were accepted by the Section at the plenary session.

The European Accreditation Council for CME (EACCME) plays a major part in setting the standards for CME/CPD throughout Europe. This leading role is being increasingly recognised by political organisations such as the European Commission and Parliament, educational and funding organisations, and doctors. It has mutual recognition with the American Medical Association.

European Union Training Requirement (ETR)

Minimum requirements are being identified in all specialties. This is required by the European Commission. Competency based Curricula and minimum training requirements will be approved by National Medical Associations.

The EBO exam has become so popular, that the location no longer can accommodate all who apply. The possibility of a second location in Berlin was discussed. The EBO now has an advisory committee to take responsibility for the exam. 27 countries were represented at the 2017 exam with

280 examiners and a 92% success rate. The Peter Eustace medal was presented to Prof Roger Hitchings from London

The UEMS is now over 60 years old.

The section is an observer at the European Coalition for Vision.

Clear understanding of the “medical act” will be increasingly important in future to ensure safe care of eye patients

The president’s term will finish in 2019 and Wagih Aclimandos was elected unopposed as President Elect.

The plenary session of the Section of Ophthalmology will be held in Rungsted, Denmark, June 9th and 10th, 2018 and in Valencia, Spain in 2019.

Professor Constantino Bianchi

With great sadness we have to report the sudden death of our beloved and appreciated colleague. For years he had been the figure-



head of the UEMS section of Ophthalmology. For several years, he worked strenuously for our section as successive Vice President, President, Past President and Liaison officer. He cemented the links with the executive of the UEMS and as a result Ophthalmology has become more intensely involved in the wider UEMS.

He played an important role in times when the UEMS was in financial difficulties. He always had the preservation of the Ophthalmology section in mind. We will miss him very much, especially his clear analytical thinking and his very diplomatic way of interacting with the UEMS executive.

Mr Peter Barry Memorial Lecture

The Ophthalmic Postgraduate Teaching Programme Lecture on December 14th will be held in memory of our esteemed colleague Mr Peter Barry, who sadly passed away in May 2017.

Guest lecturer Professor Oliver Findl, Head of the Department of Ophthalmology at the Hamusch Hospital in Vienna, will give a lecture on ‘Lens Surgery and Retinal Detachment: Risks and Prophylaxis’.

Prof Findl is a Board Member of

the ESCRS and the Head and Founder of the Vienna Institute for Research in Ocular Surgery (VIROS). His research interests are in the areas of posterior capsule opacification, optical biometry, and the pathogenesis of myopia and has authored more than 250 articles in international peer-reviewed journals.

The lecture takes place at the Education and Conference Centre, Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital and will be chaired by Dara Kilmartin.

Bayer/ICO Clinical Fellowship in Ophthalmology

In the following article, joint winners of the inaugural Bayer/ICO Clinical Fellowship, Elizabeth McElnea and Andrea Ryan speak to health journalist Danielle Barron about the invaluable experience of their chosen fellowship programmes and the positive impact it has had on their training career.

The inaugural Bayer/ICO Clinical Fellowship in Ophthalmology 2016/2017 was awarded to trainees Elizabeth McElnea and Andrea Ryan at the ICO Winter Meeting in December 2016. The Fellowship is open to all senior ophthalmology trainees in the Irish health service, who are nearing the end of their specialist training.

Andrea Ryan has now completed her Medical Retina Clinical Fellowship at Moorfields Eye Hospital in London. She explains that the ultimate goal of her fellowship was to move towards becoming competent to specialist level in the assessment, diagnosis, treatment and follow-up of patients with medical retina disease including retinal vascular, genetic and uveitic disorders, in light of the demand for these services. In addition, she said the advent of new effective treatments for these conditions has only served to augment this demand.

Andrea said, "As a specialty, ophthalmology is finally getting the attention it deserves within the Irish health service, not only in terms of awareness, with high profile campaigns relating to age-related macular degeneration and the diabetic retinopathy screening programme, but also in terms of policy and funding."

"It was recently announced that there is going to be a roll-out of the recommendations of the HSE Review of Primary Care Eye Services, which will reform primary care eye services. There is an increasing recognition of the demand for it and the need to develop the service. Ophthalmology still has one of, if not the longest, waiting lists when it comes to procedures and operations. Hopefully it is becoming more of a priority."

Andrea now hopes to bring the expertise she has gained during the

fellowship back to the Irish healthcare system and the large and growing population of Irish patients affected by these disorders.

"During my Fellowship programme I got to see a very high volume of cases in this specialty, and of course as Moorfields is one of the leading eye hospitals in the world, it receives referrals from everywhere, all over the UK, so they would have a much higher proportion of more difficult and challenging cases you may not see elsewhere. There is also such a large number of consultant specialists working here that you have the opportunity to learn from."

Meanwhile, joint winner Elizabeth McElnea commenced her fellowship in the UK in July this year, where she is completing training in ophthalmic plastic lacrimal, orbital and reconstructive surgery. Working between Aintree University Hospital, The Countess of Chester Hospital, and Macclesfield District General Hospital under four different supervising consultants, she says that she is receiving invaluable experience in the highly competitive subspecialty of ocular plastics.

"This is a recognised subspecialty but I suppose it's not that common that those three are undertaken together as a subspecialty; there are people who are qualified in plastic surgery but may not have as much experience in orbital or lacrimal surgery, so it's great that I am able to do all three together," she explains, adding that she has also been able to avail of the teaching programme at the University of Liverpool.

Elizabeth adds that she is carrying out a high volume of surgery, including complex variations of cases. "It's a single fellow training post, and I am getting unrivalled theatre exposure."

Drawn to ophthalmology as an undergraduate, Elizabeth says the combination of surgery and medicine was what initially attracted her.

During her training in Ireland, she worked in University Hospital Galway, and also the Mater Hospital in Dublin. She explains that, for her, the goal of



Winners of the Bayer/ICO Clinical Fellowship in Ophthalmology 2016/17, Andrea Ryan (centre) and Elizabeth McElnea (2nd from left), pictured with Yvonne Delaney, ICO Dean of Postgraduate Education (far left), Katy Carroll, Business Unit Manager and Neil O'Connor, Product Manager, Specialty Medicine of Bayer Limited.

the fellowship is to obtain intensive exposure to her chosen subspecialty.

"I have had great training in Ireland but the reality of the services here is that many consultants have large general clinics in addition to their specialised work. The idea of going to the UK is to get lots of exposure to subspecialty work, which isn't diluted by general ophthalmology work," she says.

She echoes Andrea in highlighting the many differences between ophthalmology practice in Ireland and the UK. "It is highly subspecialised here – the sheer volume of cases means ophthalmic surgeons are not doing any general ophthalmology, all their clinics are subspecialist clinics. That is the biggest advantage of doing this fellowship that you easily get lots of experience in the area you want. I am trying to learn as much as I can in a relatively short period of time."

It's also interesting to see the differences in health service management and organisation between the two jurisdictions, she adds. "You can see advantages and disadvantages to each, and then decide which might be applicable to your own service or department. I have to say it is a lovely working environment, everyone has

been so nice and welcoming, from the consultants to the rest of the ophthalmic surgery team and the nursing staff."

After the fellowship ends next summer, Elizabeth aims to return to Ireland, with the hope of obtaining a consultant post. She sees the fellowship as a prime opportunity to broaden her horizons before coming home to work in the Irish health service long term.

"I think it is so important to work abroad. Not only for the practical reasons, such as the exposure to your chosen subspecialty as I have mentioned, but also it is critical to see how other people do things. I don't just mean clinically, or surgically, but also from a managerial and leadership point of view. It's so beneficial to simply work in a different healthcare system and pick up ideas and knowledge from that, particularly if you are planning to come back with a view to obtaining a consultant post."

As part of the fellowship, Elizabeth also has the chance to engage in high quality research, which she says will add to the evidence-based practice of this ophthalmic surgery subspecialty.

"I have made it a point through my career to date, to try and publish even

a little bit on each job I have worked in, and I certainly intend to continue that in the UK, as best possible."

The registrar said that the funding provided by the ICO and Bayer is a critical factor in allowing her to take up this particular fellowship. "Starting a fellowship is actually quite daunting, there is a lot of transition involved, and it means a lot to have support, financial or otherwise, during this time. There is no funding associated with this post so I would have had to forego it otherwise. If this works well, the host may decide to fund it in the future and make it an ongoing fellowship, which could benefit many doctors in future years."

The ICO congratulate Andrea and Elizabeth again on their award of the Bayer / ICO Clinical Fellowship and in their achievements to date under their chosen fields of sub specialty.

The College would also like to congratulate Dr Caroline Baily, who was announced the winner of the Bayer / ICO Clinical Fellowship at the ICO Annual Conference 2017-18 in May this year. Dr Baily is currently undertaking a fellowship in Medical Retina at Manchester Royal Eye Hospital in July 2017.

Surgical Skills Course



Pictured at the Skills Course held in the Kiran Pathek Laboratory in York House in September were: Amira Abdin Salih, Paul O'Brien, Muhammad Omar Ashraf, Hafiz Syed Umar Abdur Rehman, Karen Curtin, Christine Bourke, Nora Mohd, Ruth Ellard and Esraa Hegazy. Thank you to photographer Tim Fulcher.

ICO Trainee Leads HSE Spark Ignite Innovation Programme

Conor Malone, ICO trainee was recently appointed as the first HSE National Fellow for Innovation and Change and is leading an initiative aimed at encouraging NCHDs to share innovation projects from their communities and hospitals.

Conor has established the Spark Innovation Programme, which offers doctors seed funding for innovation projects and support with the development and implementation of their ideas.

He is part of the HSE National Doctors Training and Planning (NDTP) Unit, which incorporates the Medical Education and Training Unit and Consultant Appointments and Medical Workforce Planning. NDTP now has over 60 lead NCHDs around Ireland.

The Spark Ignite innovation competition and national BrightSpark Awards will recognise and reward the creativity and leadership of NCHDs and their nursing, allied health, management and administration colleagues.

Speaking about his role, Conor said his priority with the programme is to encourage NCHDs to see themselves as influential and powerful agents for change and to share their experiences throughout the country.

Conor said the initiative is not just about big clinical sites, citing that GP practices and smaller hospitals across the country are hot houses for change and that it is important to share their stories of success. Speaking at the Health Manager Ireland Conference in the RDS on September 29th, Conor said that Irish doctors have always been innovative, and Irish NCHDs especially so. He believes we have a proud history in service development and innovation in treatment and technology and the aim is to build on that legacy.

The Spark Innovation Programme has six arms. Spark Conversation, Spark Curiosity, and Spark Debate are about provoking thought and engaging with NCHDs. Spark Seed Funding, Spark Ignite, and the BrightSpark Awards will recognise positive change and put innovative ideas into action.

Ophthalmology is a particularly dynamic speciality, Conor said, "where we have seen many superb innovation

projects recently, such as Ms. Shivona Chetty's new oculoplastics pathway at Sligo University Hospital, Dr. Christine Goodchild's review of referral processes at Beaumont Hospital, and of course the new cataract unit at RVEEH. We have a lot of great ideas to celebrate and share."

Highlighting the focus over the coming months, Conor confirmed the programme will be hearing stories of innovation from national and international doctors, bring a roadshow of workshops around the country, and hold a series of debates on controversial topics.

He added, "We are looking to the future, writing position papers on how technology will transform doctor training and consultant workforce planning. Babies born this year will become interns in 2040, so our theme for the year is #NCHD2040. What NCHDs are doing today will have a huge impact on future patients and future doctors – this is why we must value innovation."

If you would like to learn more about the Spark Innovation Programme, Conor can be contacted by email via spark@hse.ie or @drconormalone on Twitter

Princeton Lee's Phaco Bootcamp

The Irish College of Ophthalmologists recognises the importance of setting a strong surgical skill foundation for new trainees. Since 2014, Phaco Bootcamp has been a mandatory course for first year trainees.

Mr Princeton Lee designed this course to instruct phaco-mechanics and phaco-dynamics as well as the correct use of microscopes to the trainees. Phaco-mechanics focuses on the ergonomics of holding and manoeuvring the instruments in order to achieve the maximum range of movement inside the eye in a controlled fashion.

Phaco-dynamics helps trainees to understand the parameters and setting of the phaco-machine. The aim of this course is to help the trainees to practice and acquire surgical skills in a safe and controlled environment before operating in the theatre.



The 4th Phaco Bootcamp took place in St. Vincent's University Hospital. Niya Beings, Princeton Lee, Ate Altenburg, Anne Rafferty and Ruth Ellard.

Fighting Blindness Retina 2017

The annual Retina Conference organised by Fighting Blindness took place at the Radisson Blu Royal Hotel in Dublin on the 12th-14th October. Now in its 18th consecutive year, the internationally renowned three-day event was attended by over 400 delegates, including clinicians, scientists, patient advocates, industry, regulators and government representatives.

The first day of Retina 2017, coinciding with World Sight Day, included multi-stakeholder roundtable discussion on the management of clinical trials, with a focus on diseases of the retina. The Scientific Programme featured recent updates in areas of retinal gene discovery, disease mechanisms, translational studies, therapeutics and clinical applications. The group discussed the challenges faced when conducting clinical trials and how best to navigate them. Investigators from both pharmaceutical and academic-led trials, regulators, clinicians and representatives from the National Clinical Research Network discussed trial sponsorship, infrastructure and design.

Fighting Blindness has urged the Government to prioritise the funding of clinical genetic services, including Clinical Consultant Geneticists and Genetic Counsellors, for people who have inherited retinal conditions. The

Charity said such funding is fundamental to the diagnosis, care and treatment of the estimated 5,000 people living with genetic sight loss in Ireland. Ireland has among the lowest numbers of genetic staff per 100,000 population in Europe, resulting in waiting lists for clinical genetic services stretching up to 18 months and longer.

Kevin Whelan, Fighting Blindness CEO, said that based on population, the Republic of Ireland should have 14 consultant geneticists and 46 genetic counsellors.

“With just six clinical geneticists and 8 genetic counsellors working in the State, staffing levels are woefully inadequate for our needs. It is vital that we know the specific genes causing people’s sight loss as there is tremendous progress being made in developing many promising gene-specific therapies that could dramatically change people’s vision loss situations. However, without a

precise diagnosis of the underlying gene mutation, people with inherited retinal conditions will lose out”.

Mr Whelan also used the platform of Retina 2017 to highlight the lack of investment in ophthalmology services, exemplified in latest figures from the National Treatment Purchase Fund, which show ophthalmology had the second-highest inpatient/day case waiting list at 12,025 people at the end of September, with one in five patients waiting more than a year. Outpatient waiting list numbers climbed by 21 per cent to 38,094 in the 12-month period up to September, with 32 per cent waiting more than a year.

A main aim of Retina is also to facilitate networking between Irish and international colleagues, leading to future collaborations and catalysing the next generation of vision research.

Among the high-profile speakers was Prof Marc de Smet, Medical Director of Preceyes Medical Robotics in The Netherlands, and co-developer of a robotic system that he said has the potential to revolutionise eye surgery. Prof de Smet told delegates that the key advantage to using robotics is the high levels of precision for very delicate surgery, where even the most highly-skilled surgeon can have “microtremors” in his or her hands. He said, “The results, we have found, have been significantly fewer haemorrhages, and less trauma and damage to the retina. We anticipate that procedures currently off-limits will now be feasible, such as facilitating the delivery of gene therapy to the retina.”

His team aims to have regulatory approval by the end of 2018, with equipment potentially available to ophthalmic hospitals from 2019. The technology has undergone successful trials in Oxford University and the University of Rotterdam.

The Public Engagement Day, introduced in 2011 to the meeting, was held on the third day of the conference. This element provides a unique opportunity for the general public to engage with clinicians and researchers and learn more about their condition and the research that is aiming to find therapies to treat it.



Mohammad Mohammad pictured with Tahleel Salih at Retina 2017

16th International Paediatric Ophthalmology Meeting

The 16th International Paediatric Ophthalmology Meeting, organised by Professor Michael O'Keeffe, took place in Dublin on the 18th and 19th October. It was the final meeting to be hosted by Professor O'Keeffe, who has been responsible for its bi-annual organisation and programme co-ordination over the past 30 years since the first meeting took place in 1985.

The meeting attracted leading national and international paediatric specialists and covered a vast range of topics including strabismus, childhood cataracts, retinoblastoma, uveitis, neuro-ophthalmology, glaucoma and imaging in paediatric eye disease.

ICO members who presented at this year's meeting included Donal Bronsahan, who examined the treatment of childhood uveitis; Caitriona Kirwan on advances in management of congenital cataracts; Zubair Idrees on eye screening; John Stokes on amblyopia and Ian Flitcroft on myopia.

Tim Fulcher's talk outlined the types of ptosis encountered in children, the indications for surgery, the timing of surgery and the types of surgery required for different types of ptosis.

Kathryn McCreery presented on the psychosocial impact of strabismus, reviewing the scientific data underpinning the psychosocial merits of strabismus correction in both adults and children. She discussed how

strabismus is often considered cosmetic and the psychosocial effects of ocular misalignment are often underestimated. The functional benefits of ocular realignment which include improvement in binocular vision, stereopsis, visual field, and elimination of diplopia are well established. The psychosocial effects of strabismus include poor self-confidence and esteem, difficulty with social interaction and limitations in procuring employment have not been fully appreciated.

Distinguished international experts included Professor Scott Lambert from Stanford Children's Health in San Francisco and Professor Anthony Moore from University College of San Francisco, Professor Michael Repka, Vice Chair for Clinical Practice at the Wilmer Eye Institute, Francis Munier, Head of the Retinoblastoma Unit and the Oculogenetic Unit at Jules Gonin Eye Hospital, Lausanne, Switzerland and Professor David Taylor, University College London.



BACK ROW L-R: Caitriona Kirwan, Donal Bronsahan, David Taylor, Kathryn McCreery, Michael Repka, Ayad Shafiq, Tony Moore, Michael O'Keeffe.
FRONT ROW L-R: Claire Troia, Ian Flitcroft, John Burke, Gillian O'Mullane, Louise Collum, John Stokes, Tim Fulcher, Willie Reardon.

Your Training Counts

The College would like to remind and encourage trainees to complete the Medical Council's *Your Training Counts* survey which remains open until November 30th. This is the fourth year of the survey, which the Medical Council states has been imperative in helping shape a quality agenda for medical education and training in Ireland.

The collective data is used by the Medical Council in a number of ways to inform the identification of priorities in training and education which impacts on your individual experience working and training in medicine in Ireland. Three key areas which the Medical Council use *Your Training Counts* data are in setting priorities for clinical site inspections, accreditation of training programmes and in highlighting the issue of bullying in trainee learning environments locally, nationally and internationally to bring about a coordinated response.

The latest *Your Training Counts* report, published on August 31st 2017, provided a comparative report of the findings gathered since the inaugural survey in 2014 and include detailed reports on issues such as health and wellbeing, career and retention Intentions and the learning environment.

Peer collaboration and Consultants' role were rated the most positive aspects of clinical learning.

The Report revealed some of the following key statistics around the training of young doctors in Ireland over the past few years.

- The average age of the trainee population is 30.56 years
- 54% of trainees are female, and over 86% are graduates of Irish medical schools
- 36% of trainees experienced bullying or harassment in their training posts, up 2% from 2014
- 4% felt physically unsafe in their workplace

Orbis Flying Eye Film Screening in Dublin

- 25% of trainees scored their overall experiences very poorly; and around the same proportion scoring them reasonably highly
- 51% felt medical school prepared them well for their intern year, their first time working in a clinical setting
- There was a 5% increase among those who reported needing support and accessing it in 2016

The Medical Council said the results from 2014 – 2016 have shown improvement across certain areas, but that certain sectors require more work.

The survey also gathers information on trainees long term career intentions, which the Medical Council said will help with planning for the future of Irish healthcare.

Mr Bill Prasifka, Medical Council CEO said the Medical Council had taken direct action as a result of the findings of these reports over the past three years, instigating assessment visits to clinical training sites. He said the aim is to ensure all trainees have a positive training experience and obtain the best on-the-ground education possible.

Trainees can log in to the Your Training Counts survey by clicking on the personal link included in the email sent to them by the Medical Council. All responses received are confidential.

Dates for your Diary

ICO Winter Meeting

November 24th, 2017
Chartered Accountants House, Pearse St

Montgomery Lecture

November 24th, 2017
Trinity Biomedical Science Institute,
Pearse Street

Ophthalmic Postgraduate Teaching Programme

Mr Peter Barry Memorial Lecture
December 14th, 2017, RVEEH

ICO Annual Conference

16th-18th May 2018
Lyrath Hotel, Kilkenny

The Irish film premiere of *The Hospital in the Sky* – an Orbis Flying Eye Hospital film took place at the Light House Cinema on Monday 11th of September. Filmed over two weeks, *The Hospital in the Sky* follows Cindy Crawford's journey to Trujillo, Peru, where she witnessed the life-changing treatments provided for young patients on board the Flying Eye Hospital and at the local hospital.

This event follows a recent visit from the Orbis Flying Eye Hospital to Dublin Airport in March of this year which welcomed over 500 individuals on board the specially designed and converted MD-10 aircraft to learn more about the sight saving work it enables. Orbis has forged a unique and lasting alliance between the medical and aviation industries to bring ophthalmic training to communities through long term partnerships with eye care institutions and through the online learning platform, Cybersight. Donal Brosnahan has been an Orbis

volunteer since 2006, when he first visited the Flying Eye Hospital in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Donal spends a week every year volunteering for Orbis in Ethiopia, sharing his skills and expertise with local medical staff there.

Orbis Ireland is dedicated to eliminating avoidable blindness in Ethiopia where four million people are blind or visually impaired. In particular, Orbis Ireland focuses on eliminating the blinding and life destroying eye disease trachoma, where currently Ethiopia has more people affected by the disease than any other country in the world.



*Donal Brosnahan, Olya Scannell and Brendan Cummings are pictured at the Irish film premiere of *The Hospital in the Sky* – an Orbis Flying Eye Hospital film in the Light House Cinema on Monday 11th of September.*

Seeing it from the Other Side

NCBI Technology Support Team

In January of this year, the National Council for the Blind of Ireland (NCBI) established its new Technology Specialist Support Team. The remit for the new tech department is broad and hugely comprehensive. The team has been tasked with specific areas that focus around working with NCBI's employment service, Library and Media Centre and Rehabilitation Training Centre. A key focus is supporting visually impaired people in education and employment; be it someone in employment or someone wishing to seek employment in the future.

Current figures indicate that 84% of people with sight loss of working age are unemployed. One of the main strategic goals of the NCBI tech specialist team is to reduce this level of unemployment and technology is the gateway for many to live the lives they want, offering autonomy and opportunities.

The NCBI run a 12-week Fundamentals in Assistive Technology Course which is designed to give parents and resource teachers an overview of assistive technologies used by people with impaired vision. The course offers full assistive technology training, advice and support to people with sight loss in the education sector. Often these involve workplace IT assessments, assistive technology training and career workshops in conjunction with NCBI's employment advisor.

The NCBI Virtual Technology Club facilitates groups of people to come together and talk about technology, share and solve problems and hear from experts who discuss everything from the latest tech gadgets to some of the most basic daily living aids.

Tech News, the NCBI's quarterly technology e-newsletter serves to keep people up to date with the latest technology trends and products for people with sight loss, listen to technology podcasts and stay informed about upcoming technology events.

ViaOpta Apps

Two new apps, ViaOpta Navigator and ViaOpta Daily, have been developed by Novartis in partnership



JP Corcoran, member of the NCBI new Technology Specialist Support Team providing support to service-user Martin Kelly.

with the NCBI as part of a launch of a suite of vision assistance apps.

ViaOpta Navigator app enables blind or vision impaired people to move independently by providing essential information to support orientation when walking. Similarly, ViaOpta Daily uses vocal guidance and audible tutorials to help with everyday activities. The cutting-edge technology used aims to make a difference in the lives of those who live with visual impairment and who seek discreet assistance.

Commenting on the apps, Chris White, NCBI CEO, said the ViaOpta apps signal yet another advancement for blind and vision impaired people and will help them enormously as they go about everyday tasks like taking their dog out for a walk,

shopping or going to a busy café.

The ViaOpta apps are free and can be downloaded on both iOS and Android platforms at www.viaopta-apps.com

News Over Audio – The App that reads your newspaper

News over Audio, or NOA is a brand new application that will provide visually impaired people thirty of the day's top stories over audio from early morning. The initiative in association with many of the world's leading news brands, including the Irish Times, the Financial Times, the Independent, the Examiner and Telegraph. The app can be downloaded to any Android or Apple smart phone or tablet device.