

Blink



The newsletter for AOP members

September 2007

New Head of LOC Support Appointed

The Local Optometric Committee Support Unit (LOC Support) has appointed a new Head of Unit.



Georgina Gordon started in the role on 10 September 2007 based at the AOP head office and is the first person to be appointed in that position. She joins Jeanette Rhodes and Janet Loose at LOC Support and will oversee the service and ensure that it helps Local Optical Committees (LOCs) meet the new challenges for enhanced services. LOC Support will also act as a focal point for communication across and between the LOCs in their ongoing work as the local voice of the professions.

AOP Chief Executive and LOC Support board member, Bob Hughes, said: "Georgina comes to the support unit with an impressive track record in the NHS. She has great experience and a proven ability to break down barriers whilst working within the NHS structure. She will be a great asset to LOCs and to the sector."

Georgina's career began in nursing where she had ten years experience including a year working in Saudi Arabia. She then moved on to management at Bethlem & Maudsley Hospital before taking up directorships in Swansea NHS Trust and Colchester PCT. In each of these roles she gained a reputation for improving service quality. Immediately before her new role, she worked as Director of Commissioning at Harrow Primary Care Trust. This experience will help her to assist the LOCs in better understanding of practice-based commissioning, bring better negotiating skills to LOCs and to win extra resources and funding in order to provide better services for patients.

When asked of her experience of Optometrists, Ms Gordon said: "I've had hospital care and care from community opticians over many years, and I've always had an incredibly positive impression of those

practitioners. That strong impression was part of the attraction of coming here, a good impression I have had since I was seven years old."

Her first major task is to recruit ten part-time regional advisors and one part-time central advisor for LOC Support. The advertisements for these roles will appear in Optometry Today, the trade journals and in the national press. Alternatively, those interested can contact Georgina directly at georginagordon@aop.org.uk

Information about the LOCs is available at www.loc-net.org.uk which will soon become the website for LOC Support.

Conference News

The first opportunity for LOCs to meet Georgina Gordon is available at the National Optometric Conference on 25 October 2007 at Chesford Grange.

The NOC is the conference for LOC/AOC officials, Optometric Advisers and optometrists involved in GOS and primary care (or those wanting to get involved).

Following the usual day of presentations on the expansion of the role of optometry in primary care, there will be an optional half day of training for LOC/AOC officials. There are still a limited number of places available, for details of the event, please see Conference News on page 3.



Legal Advice and Comment
Conference News
AOP Honours

p2
p3
p4



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AOP Chief Executive responds to Which? report.

On 30 August 2007 the consumer group Which? published a report on eye tests called 'Testing the Testers'. This report was published on the same day as BLINK, which was therefore unable to publish the response to the report from the relevant optical bodies.

In responding to the report AOP Chief Executive, Bob Hughes said: "Optometrists are dedicated professionals who take the care of their patients very seriously, and they will want to be certain that their practice meets the highest possible standards. It would be helpful if *Which?* could share their detailed findings with us as our members will want to address any real problems, but this cannot be done from what they have published. It is clear that some of this may be based on students perhaps not recognising what experienced optometrists were doing or being familiar with the diagnostic equipment being used."



Bob Hughes

The full response from ABDO, FODO and the AOP can be viewed on the AOP website at <http://www.aop.org.uk/11878779415440.html>

Legal Helpline offers advice on shoplifting and citizen's arrest



Amicus Legal Ltd have issued advice to AOP members on how to deal with shoplifters and making a citizen's arrest.

An AOP member would have to give careful consideration to appropriate action if they suspect or catch someone shoplifting in their place of work. A citizen's arrest may be exercised, but this should be approached with caution and would be advisable only where the offender has been caught committing an offence.

A citizen's arrest is an arrest made by a civilian for any arrestable offence and this includes theft. Legally, a person may use such force as is reasonable in the circumstances in the prevention of crime, assisting in the lawful arrest of offenders or of suspected offenders. The police may then be contacted and the offenders handed over. The person making a citizen's arrest has to be certain that the offender has committed the offence.

If there is any doubt as to whether an offence has been committed, the police should be contacted as they have the right to arrest a person if they have reasonably suspected that an offence has been committed. This same right does not apply to a civilian therefore a citizen's arrest should only be made when there is absolute certainty that an offence has been committed. Compensation may be sought by an individual for assault, false imprisonment or both if no offence has been committed and they have been detained. The person could also use reasonable force to resist the arrest if he or she feels the arrest is unlawful.

For further information on this, or on any other legal issue; call the AOP legal helpline on 01206 368 434. The AOP helpline operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



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AOP hosts debate on health service commissioning at party conferences

The AOP, as part of the Eye Health Alliance (EHA), has been joint-hosting an event at each of the main political party conferences this autumn entitled "Diversity in health service commissioning".

A number of distinguished speakers have appeared on the panel with representatives from various organisations including Nick Bosanquet who chaired the debate at the Liberal Democrat conference on 17 September. He was joined by Baroness Neuberger, among others, in Brighton and a question was put to the panel by AOP councillor Thurka Sivapalan.



Baroness Neuberger

Health Minister Ben Bradshaw was one of the panel members for the same event at the Labour conference in Bournemouth this week, and former Health Minister Steven Dorrell will join the panel at the Conservative conference in Blackpool at the beginning of October.

Parliamentary Officer, Heather Marshall, will provide a round-up of the news and events at the conference once she returns from her three week stint at the conferences on behalf of the AOP and EHA. The round-up will be in the October edition of Blink. Until then, look out for a report in the next edition of Optometry Today that will include comment from Chief Executive Bob Hughes who will be attending the Conservative conference in October.

NPC launch new e-learning resource



The National Prescribing Centre (NPC) has launched a new NHS e-learning resource designed health care professionals and managers which covers prescribing, therapeutics and medicine management.

The new website, NPCi aims to provide small amounts of the best of the summarised evidence and information on topics likely to be encountered by healthcare professionals. It also includes workshops, knowledge tests and discussion boards.

NPCi, invite comments on the existing content via an online feedback form. This is a good opportunity for AOP members, especially those who are considering taking on independent prescribing, to contribute and shape the content of this resource while it is still in its early stages.

The site can be seen at www.npci.org.uk

CONFERENCE NEWS

Gain CET points from 5 day event

OT Live and the Employed Practitioners Conference will form part of a five day optometric event at Chesford Grange Hotel.



The event includes the National Optometric Conference from 24 to 25 October; LOC Training on 26 October; the Hospital Optometrists Conference from 27 to 28 October and the Employed Practitioners Conference Sunday 28 October.

OT Live is a day of presentations by well-respected professionals for practitioners on the 'front line'. The day will focus on the expansion of optometry into primary care, using clinical grand rounds to illustrate how practitioners can benefit patients and their practices.

The whole day offers 6.5 CET points and costs £150 or £75 for a half-day (morning or afternoon)

The Employed Optometrists Conference will provide practitioners with an opportunity to become better informed on various employment issues such as control of the working environment, collective bargaining and rights as an employee.

Other important issues to be covered will be taxation, Professional Indemnity Insurance the complexities arising from situations involving referral and re-examination issues and information about the many and varied modes of practice available to optometrists including how to start up a practice.

The cost of the event is £15.00 or £145.00 if you wish to take advantage of overnight accommodation for the Saturday night.

To download full programmes and booking forms for all events, or to book online, please visit the AOP website at www.aop.org.uk or contact Tracy Symons at the AOP on 020 7 7 8 7 1 1 1 9 or email tracysymons@aop.org.uk



BSI recommends re-certification for AOP

The AOP's Quality Management System (QMS) was reviewed by the British Standards Institution (BSI) this month and registration was continued with no nonconformity issues being raised.



The review looked at the internal procedures at the AOP and the author of the report noted that the small number of issues from the last assessment had all been reviewed and the corrective actions effectively implemented.

The report stated "The business management system is under review, and demonstrates a positive approach to continual improvement."

The review highlights the way that AOP staff are able to adapt to change and seek to offer the best possible service to our members. Business Services Manager, Jennie Gambon was singled out for high praise by the assessor.

The BSI Management Systems division conducted the review and is one of the worlds leading certification bodies registering over 60,000 organisations in over 100 countries. It assessed the AOP's QMS using the ISO 9001 standard, the world's most established framework for management systems.

AOP legal team reminder to students

The AOP's Head of Legal Services, Fiona Mitchell, has issued a reminder to all student members of the AOP that they must register with the General Optical Council (GOC) during their studies.

Letters were sent to all students who were removed from the GOC register this year by the AOP legal services team reminding them to register. The legal team stressed the importance of registration with the GOC for students as it may have implications once qualified, if there was a period of non-registration before full qualification.

Members who have any enquiries about this issue should contact the AOP on 020 7261 9661 and ask to speak to a member of the legal team.

Honours available for services to the profession



The AOP welcomes nominations from anyone to honour an individual or organisation with one of the four AOP awards.

The four AOP awards are:

- The Certificate of Merit, which is awarded to an AOP member in recognition of his or her contribution to the profession or the work of the Association.
- AOP Honorary Membership, which is awarded to an individual who has made a significant contribution to the profession and/or the work of the Association.
- The Peter Yeo Medal, which is awarded in recognition of the recipient's outstanding service to the AOP and the profession. The award is named in honour of Peter Yeo, who died in January 1999, having devoted much of his professional life to helping fellow optometrists directly and through his work with the Association of Optometrists.
- The Award for the Advancement of Optometry is an award to recognise a person, body, group or institution for introducing or developing innovative practices or schemes which promote or advance the practice of optometry in the United Kingdom.



Trevor Warburton presents award to Lewis MacDonald

Nominations will be considered by the Association's Awards Committee and recommendations for awards will be made to the Board of Directors.

Awards may be presented to recipients locally to where they live or work, or, where appropriate, by the AOP at an AOP Council meeting or AGM.

If you would like to nominate a person or organisation for an award please contact Steven King at the AOP via e-mail: stevenking@aop.org.uk



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