

# Re:View

Keeping excellence in your sights | September 2016 | Issue 27

**Tips for writing  
an essay**

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**Fifteen years  
of ABDO College**

Key milestones in  
ABDO College's development

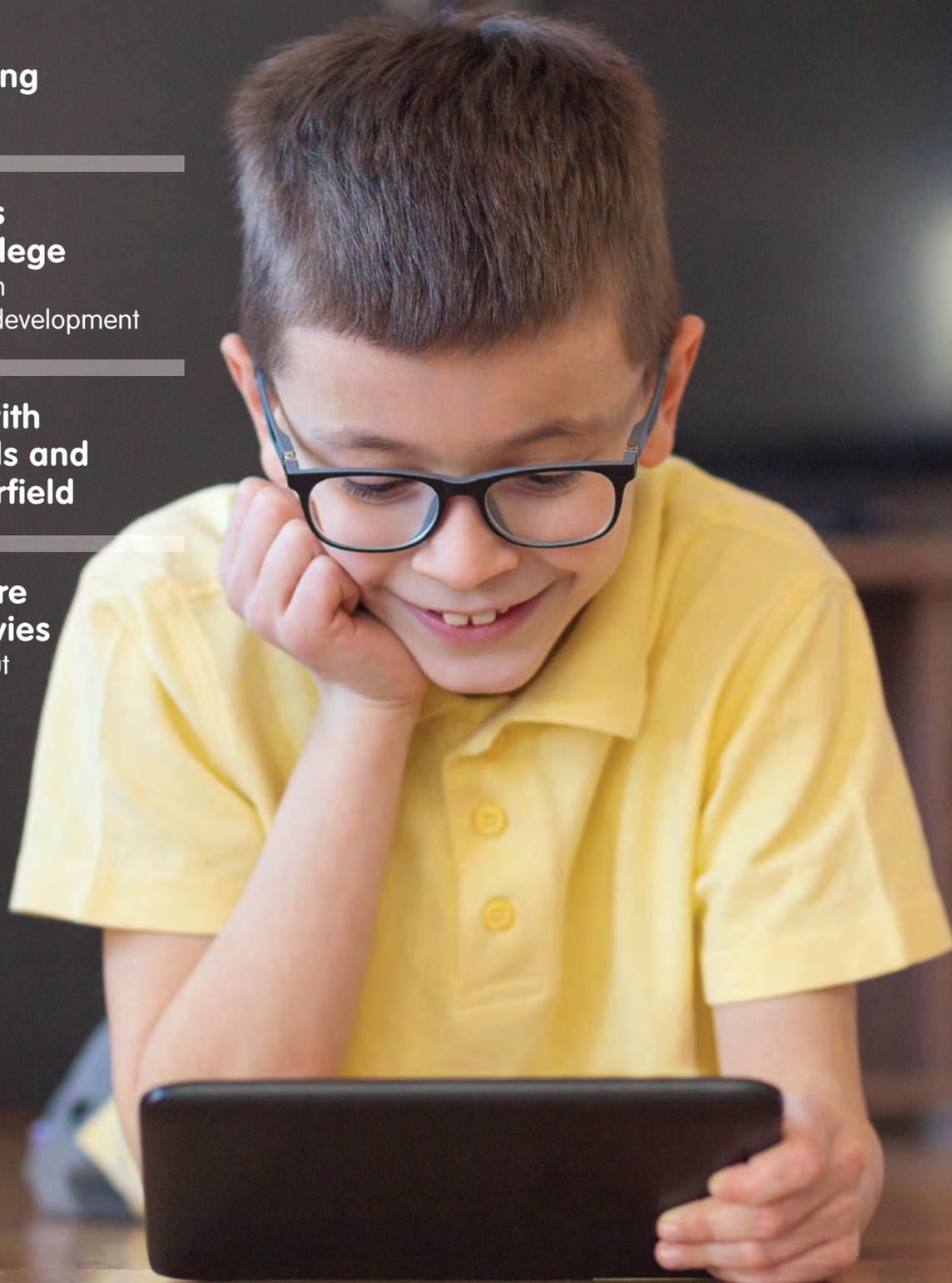
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**Interviews with  
Katie Nicholls and  
Simon Butterfield**

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**Profile feature  
on Katie Davies**

We find out about  
Katie and her  
research



# Developing the future of optics



In this issue of *Re:View* we look back over the fifteen years since the College was founded, and achievements along the way. We find out

about Katie Davies and her research into the development of paediatric myopia. As well as helpful tips for writing an essay, there are interviews with two of the newer members of the academic team: Katie Nicholls and Simon Butterfield. We also hear how the College is moving to a new online learning platform.

I'm pleased to inform you that ABDO College has appointed three new trustees. Daryl Newsome took up his appointment on 21 July 2016, he replacing former chairman of the trustees Huntly Taylor; Geri Dynan will join us on 29 September 2016, and replaces Kevin Gutsell; Ian Wills will take up his appointment on 26 January 2017 to replace Matt Trusty. I welcome Daryl, Geri and Ian to the board of trustees and look forward to working with them.

I'm also delighted that Anthony Blackman has accepted a new role at ABDO College as courses coordinator, optical support programmes. In November, Nick Walsh will join the

ABDO team in the newly created position of sector skills development officer and he will have responsibility for promoting ABDO and WCSM qualifications, as well as courses run by ABDO College. I wish Anthony and Nick every success in their new roles.

As you can see there's quite a lot happening at the moment and, together with ABDO, the College is continuing to invest in resources for developing the future of optics.

## **Angela McNamee**

BSc(Hons) MCOptom FBDO (Hons) CL FBCLA Cert Ed

**Chairman,**  
**ABDO College Board of Trustees**

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# Tips for writing an essay

If you are committing to the BSc (Hons) track alongside your FBDO qualification, you will find that you need to write an essay for each module.

Whether you have gone straight from school or college to study, or you have taken a gap, this can seem like a daunting task. But like everything else on the course, knowing how to tackle the task of an essay is half the battle. In this article we hear from past and current students who share their tips.

If you are unsure about how to write a good essay, take a little time early in the course to do some research. There are lots of helpful guides on the topic. Rachel Locker is currently doing the degree course at ABDO College after taking a two year break from education. She says, "I found it hard to get back into the swing of writing essays, especially to the standard of a degree level. The best advice I can give to future student DOs is to get hold of the Palgrave Study Skills series of books by Stella Cottrell, as well as 'Cite Them Right' by Richard Pears & Graham Shields and 'How to write better essays' by Bryan Greetham. They have got me through my essays with happy percentages!" Laura Clark, who is currently in her second year at ABDO College says, "I also found 'The Study Skills Handbook' by Stella Cottrell helpful."

It's not just people studying for the FBDO and BSc who need to brush up their study skills. Keith Dickinson is midway through the ABDO College tutor course, he says, "I found returning to

education after 30+ years in practice pretty daunting initially. The set book for the course 'The Sciences Good Study Guide' by Northedge, Thomas, Lane and Peasgood was a great help in getting me back into study mode and is one I wish I had access to back in the 80s when I was studying at Bradford. I also found 'The Mature Student's Guide to Writing' by Jean Rose (Palgrave) and 'Use Your Head' by Tony Buzan (BBC Active) to be helpful. Both books opened up the world of writing and thinking about things. I went from struggling to get 500 words for my first essay to rattling out 1,000 words and still having more to say."

As well as reading about the topic, ask your tutors to talk about what they expect from the structure of your first essay. Something as simple as planning a beginning, a middle and an end can help you. Break this down a little further, and establish what key points you want to make in your essay – are there arguments for and against something, or a number of essentials that you need to cover? Thomas Webster qualified in 2014. He currently practises at Vision Express in Leeds and Doncaster and is a trainee CLO. He says, "It's all about preparation and planning. Plan what you are going to talk about. Essays are daunting when you don't have a clue where you are going with them."

Preparation for the content of your essay should start early, right from when you begin to study each topic. Laura Clark says, "I find that keeping a note of what you read and what it's was about (to jog your memory later) then getting the reference down means you can just copy and paste it into your essay and don't need to worry about it as you know it's there! And if you need you use it for future essays you will always have it to hand."

Stuart Wellings qualified in 2011 as one of the first group of students to do the BSc course. He says, "It was tough going to begin with but by the time the dissertation came around I'd got to grips with how to write an essay." Stuart's tip is to use Google Books to help your initial research. He says, "I found it a quicker and easier way to research and find sources of information that can be used to back up statements and provide evidence. It opens up your search to books outside of optics too and makes referencing a simple process. I found it useful to be able to bookmark pages on my laptop rather than having to have loads of actual books to search through."

Steven Pringle is just finishing his third year of the degree course at ABDO College. He says, "I have found time management to be especially important. Start early and do loads of background reading on the subject, as much as possible." Laura Clark backs this up: "Do not leave it till last minute!" Rachel Locker says, "I would personally recommend reading as many sources as you can, even sources outside the curriculum." Laura Clark has a further suggestion for the planning stage of

your essay: "I found discussing with fellow students and colleagues very beneficial as they would always come up with different points with could help you in your arguments." And Rachel Locker says, "The book I recommended advises to prepare you may want to create a mind map, for example." Think about different strategies for drawing out all the points that you could include in an essay, whether it is a mind map, a list, or ideas on post it notes or file cards. With all the materials in front of you, you can then take time to refine what you want to include so it fits the question you are addressing. This point is worth emphasising: don't just regurgitate everything you have studied but ask yourself, is what I am writing directly related to the essay title?

Once you have noted down the points you want to cover you will have a better idea of how many words you can write for each point: an essay of a thousand words can seem daunting, but if you have five points to make, and allow a hundred words for a short introduction and conclusion, then you will find it much less intimidating to write a hundred and sixty words or thereabouts on each of your main points. One further tip on planning: don't write your introduction at the start! Go back and write it, and the conclusion, when you have drafted your main points.

Referencing can seem like a stumbling block at the start, but it really is as simple as learning what the rules are for the academic institution that you are studying at. Ant Blackman, senior lecturer, says, "At ABDO College and Canterbury Christ Church University we use the Harvard

referencing system. We introduce it right at the beginning of the FD course in 'Foundations for Learning'. We find that students get better as time goes on, but of course as student's progress through the three years of the degree course we become stricter on referencing. Students may fall down by not giving the full reference, or being tripped up by more unusual sources such as DVDs and newspaper clips." Look in the resources section at the end of the article for links to full details of the Harvard system and how to use it.

Thomas Webster says, "Reference as you go so you know where you got them from as well. There is nothing worse than using a reference or quote and not being about to remember where it was from." If you do find yourself in this sticky situation, Stuart Wellings says, "Google Books was a godsend." It is much easier nowadays to put part of a quote into Google and find the paper or book it comes from, but this tip won't save you every time. Remember that noting the source down as you go can save you from hours of hunting!

Technology can also help you with referencing. Steve Pringle suggests: "Do your reference list as you go or use a reference manager like Refworks, then you don't have the whole thing

to do at the end." Refworks is an online bibliographic management programme that allows users to create a personal database of references and generate bibliographies in a variety of formats. There are a number of different reference managers available online.

Once you have completed a draft of your essay, ideally you should have some time to take a break before you re-read it. Re-reading is essential, but even after a break it can be hard to spot your own errors. Steve Pringle says, "Get as many people as you can to proof read as you will miss mistakes." It is great if you can ask a colleague to proof read, but you don't need an optical expert to spot spelling mistakes, or query whether something makes sense. Always print out your work to check it, as you can see different errors on paper that you may miss on screen. Reading your work aloud is another way to check it with fresh eyes.

Now, you should have an essay that you have confidence in, which you feel conveys your points. It may be a tough journey to write your first essay, but most students will say it gets easier with practice. And the final word goes to Rachel Locker who says, "Writing essays can be tough... but so worth it if you love the job you do!"

### Resources

The Palgrave Study Skills series cover a range of topics to help you develop your study skills and are available from the ABDO College Bookshop.

Find out more about the Harvard referencing system:

<http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/library/citing-references.aspx>

<http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/library/docs/harvard.pdf>

# Fifteen years of ABDO College

ABDO College is the only college in the UK devoted solely to the teaching of the theory and practical aspects of ophthalmic dispensing and its related specialist areas. In this feature we look back over the last fifteen years since the College took residence in Godmersham Park, Kent, and forward into the future for the College.

Sir Anthony Garrett is the general secretary of ABDO, and was a key force in developing ABDO College. He says, "When I came to ABDO there was a file full of ideas about developing a college on behalf of the Association, but no one had put a business plan together. We kicked off serious planning in 2000, and acquired the building in 2001. We didn't know how it would grow, but there was a vision that ABDO should be a driving force in optical training in the UK. We recruited Jo Underwood, regarded as one of the best people in the business, to take the College forward and it has grown to the top end of our expectations. It has become a centre of excellence as we hoped. We have been able to demonstrate to the profession that we can manage the whole training process, using blended learning, coursework and block release."

Jo Underwood has been principal of the College since it launched in 2001. She also headed up the team that brokered the partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), a key step forward in the College's development, leading to the ability to offer an honours degree in ophthalmic dispensing. Jo Underwood says, "The partnership



Sir Anthony Garrett

began as a meeting of myself and then College operations manager Michelle Derbyshire with Margaret Andrews and Kate Springett from CCCU. We discussed our ABDO level 6 diploma programme and whether it would be appropriate for it to be offered as a Foundation Degree/ BSc (Hons) programme. We found them to be approachable, supportive and positive and we knew immediately that we would be able to work well with them. We still feel the same and really enjoy working together as a team."

Tony Garrett is equally positive about the partnership: "We got the FBDO

qualification benchmarked at level 6, and the university partnership has meant that we could expand on this to offer a degree, like many other quasi-medical support services. This partnership with CCCU has given us the academic thumbs up. We have achieved the status we needed. Now we can offer a degree for all those who want it. It is a fantastic opportunity for our members."

Kate Springett, Head of the School of Allied Health Professions at CCCU is equally positive about the way the College and the University work together: "The partnership is now well-established, works well, and is based on mutual respect." Jo Underwood adds, "The relationship is now more mature but the support and feeling of partnership we have is a great comfort and joy to me."

Teamwork is a key factor in the success of the College and the partnership, and students often speak warmly of the staff who have helped them. Tony Garratt explains, "It is great that Jo Underwood has been here since the beginning, numbers of staff have grown but we have great retention which is testament to her leadership. The staff are doing a great job preparing people for the profession." Kate Springett adds, "Canterbury Christ Church University has established strong links between ABDO College academic staff with the help of academic link tutor Anthony Blackman."

A good staff team leads to successful students who are working in all parts of the profession. Jo Underwood says, "I am proud of all my past students but especially those who have risen to

become role models in the profession. I am delighted when ex-students return to us as tutors, examiners, board members, trustees and particularly as my new teaching colleagues.”

A recent development for the ABDO College/CCCU partnership is the MSc in Health and Wellbeing. Tony Garrett says, “Having had a number of students complete their degree very successfully, the masters offers the chance for them to progress. All professions need academics – getting people to enter the field of research is hugely important.”

Jo Underwood adds, “I have said before that there is a plethora of research in the field of ophthalmology but very little in optometry and especially ophthalmic dispensing that is independent. I long to see more dispensing opticians entering the field of research to show the evidence base for many of the decisions we make daily in practice.” Kate Springett also backs the initiative to further professional research: “A number of graduates are interested in taking their studies further into masters and doctoral study. They can see a direction for personal professional development and that motivation must influence the quality of patient care. The ABDO College/CCCU partnership has worked together for a number of initiatives including research, such as one with Professor Darren Shickle from the University of Leeds, and research development is on-going with undergraduate research projects displayed by ABDO College at a number of events.”

The degree level qualification is also influencing professional practice



Jo Underwood

across the industry. Jo Underwood says, “I am proud of the quality and confidence of our students and the graduate skills they bring to the workplace.” Kate Springett adds, “Comments from industry colleagues and practice owners suggest there is beneficial impact of having degree level students in the workplace. For example they may be able to use degree level DOs to do development work for the practice or company that they would not otherwise have been able to deliver. Some of the third year projects have taken students into specialist area – sports eyewear, visual disabilities; specialist skills which they could offer to the benefit of their practice.”

The future is looking positive for ABDO College, with growing student numbers, a new partnership with the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers, new courses as well as a wider remit for the profession. Jo Underwood says, “ABDO

College and CCCU are currently looking to provide a new top-up degree for our diploma students. We ran one a few years ago but it was based on the change of GOC core competencies and is no longer appropriate. We are now looking to see if it could be based around current CET requirements but the work is on-going. I feel that the future with CCCU is excellent; we feel a valued and supported partner and who could ask for more than that!”

Kate Springett sees vision health promotion as a key part of the evolving role of the DO: “From a university point of view, reading the policy drivers and understanding population needs in the UK and internationally, our graduates have the potential to transfer their understanding of vision health promotion. For the UK population, graduate DOs can and do work in a person-centred way so advice is individualised and evidence based, and this must benefit individuals and communities.” And Tony Garrett explains how ABDO College could extend its influence further still beyond the UK: “One exciting thing for us now is that in the coming years we will be moving from a paper based course programme to an electronic one, allowing us to serve students anywhere in the world. We are excited about offering online courses to people in other countries who can’t access a qualification at this level.” Summing up, he adds, “ABDO College is a very stable ship. Now over a quarter of the whole profession have studied via Godmersham and we can only see that number growing in the future.”

# Key milestones in ABDO College's development

- 2001**
- ABDO College is founded to offer distance and blended learning education for the optical profession, at Godmersham Park, Kent.
  - Jo Underwood is appointed principal and leads on the development of the College.
  - A small group of 20 students complete their first block in the spring; as negotiations are still taking place on the lease of Godmersham Park, conference facilities are used in a nearby hotel.
  - Godmersham Park opens its doors to students on 26 March, and by September all ABDO distance learning students are transferred to ABDO College.
  - The ABDO College Bookshop is established.
- 2002**
- In March 2002 low vision tutorials take place in Godmersham for the first time.
  - September 2002 sees the introduction of contact lens block release and the establishment of a contact lens instruments laboratory at Godmersham.
- 2006**
- ABDO College starts to explore partnerships for a degree programme; initial contact is made with a number of universities and Canterbury Christ Church University emerges as the forerunner for a mutually beneficial partnership.
- 2008**
- ABDO College, working with Canterbury Christ Church University, launches a Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing course.
- 2009**
- ABDO College adopts new branding and corporate identity guidelines.
  - In April the College produces the first issue of its newsletter, which is subsequently titled *Re:View*.
  - In July ABDO College launches its own website: [www.abdocollege.org.uk](http://www.abdocollege.org.uk).
- 2010**
- ABDO College secures validation from Canterbury Christ Church University and final approval from the General Optical Council for its BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing course.
- 2011**
- ABDO College with Canterbury Christ Church University launch a BSc (Hons) in Optical Dispensing Studies course specifically designed for qualified DOs who are seeking to acquire a career related degree.
  - The first ever Foundation Degree presentations take place, as well as a celebration reception at ABDO College in Godmersham for the first recipients of the BSc (Hons) in Optical Dispensing Studies degree.
- 2015**
- ABDO College and CCCU introduce the MSc programme for dispensing opticians.
  - ABDO College takes over the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers training courses for optical technicians and optical retail staff leading to WCSM's nationally accredited qualifications.
  - ABDO College launches a brand new website with a fresh look.
- 2016**
- ABDO College celebrates fifteen years at Godmersham Park.
  - Over 800 students are registered on ABDO and WCSM courses.
- 2017**
- ABDO College will celebrate ten years of partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University.





## 2016/17 prospectus

**ABDO College specialises in distance and blended learning education for the optical profession. It is the only college in the UK devoted solely to the teaching of ophthalmic dispensing and its related specialist areas.**

**Offering a range of courses including access, foundation degree, diploma, degree, advanced and honours, ABDO College provides quality programmes leading to ABDO examinations and qualifications.**

**To obtain a copy of the prospectus, please contact the Courses Team at ABDO College on 01227 738 829 (Option 1), or email [info@abdocollege.org.uk](mailto:info@abdocollege.org.uk)**

## Katie Davies

We find out about Katie and her research

Every issue of *Re:View* features one of the research projects carried out by the final year BSc (Hons) students at ABDO College. In this issue we find out more about Katie Davies, who graduated in 2015 with a BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing, and her dissertation project where she asked a question that is relevant for every practitioner: "How can time outside influence the development of paediatric myopia?"

Katie Davies has worked at Specsavers in Ringwood for a number of years. She says, "I started as a Saturday girl, and I really enjoyed it. I was at sixth form college, I'd applied for university and was going to go and do primary teaching. I covered more hours at Specsavers over the summer, and my boss offered me the chance to do the ophthalmic dispensing course at ABDO College. I thought it looked really good, I wasn't sure how well I'd done in my exams and whether I'd get into university to do teaching, and I liked the idea of working while studying. When I got my A level results I did better than I had expected and got the results I needed to do teaching, but I burst into tears. It was at that moment I realised I really wanted to continue in optics. I had to ring up the university and turn down my place, which was a strange feeling, but it has been the best decision I've made!" Katie continues, "What I realise now is that I was keen to get a degree, so being able to do the degree course at ABDO College did appeal. And looking back I can see that I was attracted to the fact that both teaching and optics qualified

you for a specific job at the end that you can put into practice in the real world. Now my friends who are doing more general subjects have graduated they are back to square one, and have to decide what to do, where as I have already made a start at my career."

Katie spent three years attending ABDO College on block release, completing coursework at home, and continuing to work at Specsavers. She says, "I loved my course. I work with a lovely bunch of



Katie Davies



**'My research concluded that the amount of time children spend outside can affect the rate at which myopia can progress. Studies have suggested that this is not down to the increased proportion of time looking at more distant objects, but that ambient light may be a key factor.'**

colleagues, and I love working with the public. It was really good to attend block release. I met people from all different walks of life at the college, and I loved sharing tips on different ways to do things. I know I've made some friends for life at ABDO College."

Every student finds that some parts of the course are a struggle. Katie says, "It is difficult carrying on with work, coursework and life – I found the balance difficult. I was the youngest on my course, fresh out of school. I really admire the people who combined study with looking after their family."

Considering how her A levels helped her, Katie says, "I had done A level maths which helps, along with biology, English literature and psychology. Even with those subjects, the thing I found difficult was the essays, and understanding what was needed to get the marks. With the coursework I had to crack the method which isn't always easy when you are studying at home by yourself – sometimes I had to contact the tutor."

Every student is asked to pick their own subject for their final year dissertation. Katie explains how she chose her topic:

"I'm quite short-sighted, and I enjoyed doing paediatric dispensing. I become more short-sighted doing the course which got me thinking." Katie's research question was, "How can time outside influence the development of paediatric myopia?" She says, "It makes such a difference selecting your own topic: you can be really motivated because you are interested right from the start." Commenting on how she carried out the research, Katie says, "I found that I had quite a few studies to look through: it was hard to select which ones to use in the dissertation, to assess which are most reliable and valid. It takes time to read through, and they don't all meet what you need. Getting the info together takes time, writing it up is tough because you want to include everything, but you are restricted on word count. The length restriction does make you pick out the best information."

Overall, Katie was delighted with the results of her study. She says, "My research concluded that the amount of time children spend outside can affect the rate at which myopia can progress. Studies have suggested that this is not down to the increased proportion of time looking at more distant objects, but that ambient light may be a key factor."

Katie has continued to work at Specsavers since qualifying. She says, "I am really happy with what I'm doing now I'm qualified. I'm considering the CLO course sometime in the future, but right now I am just enjoying putting everything into practice. I definitely made the right career decision."

# How can time outside influence the development of paediatric myopia?

By Katie Davies BSc(Hons) FBDO

## INTRODUCTION

The development of myopia is a topic that has been explored and developed continuously by professionals, in an attempt to discover correlations and causes in children and adults. Previous research has explored the impact of prescribing reading additions to myopic children. Studies by Gwiazda *et al* (2003), Edwards *et al* (2002) and Leung *et al* (1999) all show that when a child uses progressive lenses with a near addition, myopia development is reduced. One in three children aged five to seven have their own tablet computer (Childwise, 2015); making this topic especially important in today's technological society.

## METHOD

In order to collate results in response to the proposed research, advanced searches were conducted to find four articles for analysis. Advanced searches allowed for certain criteria to be selected, retrieving the most relevant data. The selection of the studies was precise, selecting certain dates and keywords in order to narrow down database responses. Through the use of critical frameworks the strength and weaknesses of the articles were explored and the significance of the results analysed academically.

## FINDINGS

Results concluded by Dirani *et al*, (2009), Deng *et al* (2010) and Guggenheim *et al* (2012) all indicate that more time spent playing sports outdoors significantly reduces the chances of incidence myopia within children. Although this was also indicated by Jones-Jordan *et al* (2012); they found that time spent outdoors and the rate of myopia progression was not significant.

Dirani *et al* (2009) found that this result was not mirrored when comparing indoor and outside sports involvement, finding that indoor sports had no impact on incident myopia. Guggenheim *et al* (2012) concluded that time spent outdoors rather than time spent playing sport showed a stronger correlation in decreasing the rate of paediatric myopia development. Results were collated from each study; Dirani *et al*, (2009), Deng *et al* (2010), Guggenheim *et al* (2012) and Jones-Jordan (2012) through questionnaires and eye examination results. Dirani *et al*, (2009), Guggenheim *et al* (2012) and Jones-Jordan (2012) performed refraction with aid of cycloplegic drops and an auto refractor, whereas refractive error in the Deng *et al* (2012) study was completed by retinoscopy.

Dirani *et al* (2009) openly recognised that there was a significantly lower number of ethnic Chinese within non-participants when compared

with their participant group. Moreover Jones-Jordan *et al* (2012) control their method by sex, ethnicity and age, however they do not state the proportion of each ethnicity. 95 per cent of Deng *et al*'s (2012) participants are Caucasian whilst Guggenheim *et al*'s (2012) participant's ethnicity is not revealed.

## DISCUSSION

Across the four studies analysed the ages ranged from birth to twenty years old, allowing for an understanding to be developed about the correlation between time spent outdoors and paediatric myopia development across an individual's childhood. Due to the longitudinal nature of each study, trends will be noticed and developed, which will allow for further study where these trends are apparent.

The questionnaires used had pre-set answers to which patients and their parents were asked to answer honestly and accurately, allowing for intensive amounts of quantitative data to be collected for analysis. The questionnaires completed by Dirani *et al* (2009) and Jones-Jordan (2012) are very similar; this was intentionally done to facilitate accurate comparisons between the two studies.

Cycloplegic refraction was completed in order to obtain accurate refraction results in the research completed by Dirani *et al* (2009), Guggenheim *et al* (2012) and Jones-Jordan (2012) and retinoscopy was completed in the Deng *et al* (2010) study. Due to these differences, caution should be taken when comparing results as it is important to recognise the mistakes made naturally during refraction.

Misclassification bias is apparent when studies fail to measure what they originally intended to (Szklo and Nieto, 2014). An external event may have a significant effect on the studies, however research has incorrectly identified that the measured factor is causing the results. This is known as a false positive. In this case the light exposure may be having a greater effect on myopia development, rather than the activity that a child participates in outdoors.



Researchers have concluded that time spent outdoors decreases the level of myopia development in children throughout their childhood. The studies show that a reduction in myopia is caused by the amount of time a child spends outdoors and is not dependent on the activity partaken is as originally thought. However the light levels outside and inside is a factor that has not been recorded and analysed in these articles.

Further studies have developed these results, including a study completed by Ashby *et al* (2009) where the myopic development of chicks was factored against their exposure to ambient light. The results show that the higher levels of ambient light exposure lowers myopic refractive error. Moreover, Dharani (2012) considered the validity and reliability of patients wearing light meters, as a basis for future research.

## CONCLUSION

Research shows how the time spent outside is correlated to the development of myopia in children. The longitudinal studies explored allow a long term insight into how time spent outside slows myopia development. As a DO it is important to recognise the rate of myopia progression may be impacted by environment as well as genetics. This knowledge can be incorporated into ophthalmic, educational and social sectors, aiding children by slowing their rate of myopia development. Education and advice is vital; for example, encouraging children to spend more time outdoors rather being inside using a tablet, computer or phone. By giving accurate advice to patients this may lead to a dramatic reduction in paediatric myopia development, although it is essential that the genetic causation is not ignored completely.

It is essential to understand that this slow in myopia development may be due to another factor such as ambient light exposure rather than the activity the patient partakes in. Ambient light exposure could be responsible for myopia progression, with longitudinal studies in the pipeline already in an attempt to prove this hypothesis.



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# Katie Nicholls

Dispensing optician Katie Nicholls BSc(Hons) FBDO is a lecturer at ABDO College, and combines this with working for Pen Optical Trust. In this interview you can find out a little more about Katie.

She says, "I was looking for a job, and there was one advertised as a receptionist in an opticians in Whitstable. I got the job, and within three weeks I knew that I loved it. I continued working there, and as senior staff left I worked my way up to manager. I wanted to do the DO course, but there weren't enough staff for me to take time out of the practice. When Specsavers opened up a couple of doors along I saw an opportunity to take the course. I applied and got the in-store trainer position, and they agreed to put me through the DO course"

Katie studied to become a dispensing optician via block release at ABDO College. She says, "I fell in love with the College, the lecturers were amazing. On my first block release in 2010, within three days of being there I was saying, 'I've got to work here, I really want to be part of this team'."

Katie successfully achieved her FBDO and degree. She says, "18 months after qualifying I decided to leave full time employment for locum work. I sent letters to 48 opticians around Kent. It was a big scary jump but it was the best thing I did. I've worked in some great places as a locum and have made links with practices where I still locum over the summer when I'm not teaching." Alongside this, Katie signed up for the

distance learning tutors course through ABDO College. She says, "I love learning and enjoy expanding my knowledge, and in the back of my mind I had the

**'The most difficult part has been relearning all the information so that you have the confidence to teach it'.**

thought that completing this course and becoming a supervisor might stand me in good stead if I wanted to become a lecturer at ABDO College."

organisation, and so positive, giving an opportunity to people who want to do well." Katie had planned to work three days a week for Pen, but then saw the opportunity to become a lecturer at ABDO College and decided it was time to revisit her old dream. After a successful application, Katie now works at the College on Mondays, Tuesdays and Friday mornings. She says, "I teach the students and I'm module

leader on two of the first year modules. This involves creating the module handbooks, marking and overseeing exams."

**'While working as a DO I have had some amazing opportunities. Once you become a qualified DO, the opportunities are endless. If you want to do something, you just need to look for the chance and go for it.' Her advice to any DO is: 'Enjoying your job is essential so really go for what you want'.**

At the same time, Katie linked up with Tanjit Dosanjh who runs Pen Optical Trust, offering optical training to prisoners who are due to be released. She says, "I was really interested in working with Pen. It is an amazing

Six months into the job, Katie is settling into her new role. She says, "The most difficult part has been relearning all the information so that you have the confidence to teach it. As I review it, though, it all comes back to

## Simon Butterfield



me.” The size of the classes is also a new challenge. Katie explains: “In the past I only trained small groups of five or six, but at the College I teach 21 people or lecture to double that. My challenge has been to stand up in front of big groups and feel confident answering questions.” Despite all that, Katie says, “I love it – it’s a dream job.”

In her small amount of spare time, Katie enjoys taking part in shows with the Playhouse in Whitstable. She adds, “I also enjoy a round of golf.” She is continuing to feed her love of knowledge and says, “I’m starting the PG Cert for higher education in September. And I’d like to go on and do the Contact Lens Certificate or Low Vision Honours course. The more I know the more I can help others.”

Katie continues to be enthusiastic about her chosen career. She says, “While working as a DO I have had some amazing opportunities. Once you become a qualified DO, the opportunities are endless. If you want to do something, you just need to look for the chance and go for it.” Her advice to any DO is: “Enjoying your job is essential so really go for what you want”.

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As ABDO College expands its student numbers there is a need for new lecturers. In this issue of *Re:View*, meet Simon Butterfield BSc FBDO one of the latest members of the ABDO College team.

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Simon Butterfield joined ABDO College at the start of 2016, moving from a position in Specsavers in Cardiff. In between preparing for the autumn term and developing the new online learning environment for ABDO College, Moodle, Simon explained how he got started in optics: “In my first job out of school I worked as a stock boy for Clarks. Over a number of years I worked my way up to store manager. One of my colleagues made the leap from Clarks to become a Specsavers director. He was managing four practises in Cardiff, and a couple of months after he left he offered me a job as a manager of one of the stores. I was keen to use my management skills and retail background in a new field, but it was a very steep learning curve. The job was in a large store with lots of staff. I managed the contact lens team at first.”

Simon found that he could take across many of his skills, but also needed to learn new ones. He says, “As a manager I was used to working to operational best practice and service standards, but in optics you also need clinical knowledge, knowledge of NHS practice, and professional conduct. I was lucky – the other directors had been in the field for up to thirty years. I did find it daunting to face an unknown field. I had been used to knowing more, doing more about my subject than members

of my staff team, but now I was in a place where I was expected to manage people who knew more than me. This meant that my first job was to find out as much as possible about optics while continuing to use what I’d learnt as a manager to manage the people.”

Simon soon settled into the field of optics, working at Specsavers for almost a decade. As his career progressed he moved to a different store within the same group. He says, “In this position I finally had time to start the FBDO course. A manager who is also a dispensing optician makes much more sense – you can give patient confidence in the specs that you are dispensing. What’s more, I’d worked with some really good DOs,



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so I was clear about many of the things that I didn't know! And that's one of the hardest jobs with new OAs, explaining to them what they don't know."

Simon had a positive experience studying with a combination of distance learning and block release at ABDO College as he explains: "The moment I came to the College I knew that in the future I would want to return to teach. The location is fab, all the lecturers were amazing and gain a lot of respect from the students for the way they pass on their knowledge and dedication.

Since Simon started in February he has been developing his skills. He says, "Lecturing is another steep learning curve. It's not that long since I was studying myself, so I have lots of current information, but there are lots of bits of tacit knowledge that you don't apply every day in practice. I have to prepare again for every session with students." He adds, "I want to thank the other lecturers and College staff who have made my move here so amazing, with a special mention to Jo Underwood who has given me so much support, and

**'The moment I came to the College I knew that in the future I would want to return to teach.'**

There were three student DOs from the practice group on the course at the same time as me. Together with the people I met at the College that meant that I had a great peer group with different skill sets which helped me learn. I was based in central Cardiff at the time, and it was easy enough to travel to Godmersham."

Simon graduated in August 2014. He says, "I imagined it might be 10 years before I had enough experience to achieve my dream of working at ABDO College, so I signed up for the low vision course, and started doing some clinics in practice. Part way through that, I saw the lecturer job advertised. I spent a week wondering if I should apply, and finally did. I feel very lucky to have the job of my dreams."

Sally Bates and Gillian Smith for their incredible knowledge and experience in guiding me over the past six months."

Becoming a lecturer has made Simon examine different learning styles. He says, "I've always been an audio visual student, but lots of people in the profession are more practical learners, so I have to devise different ways to show different students and help them learn. I have to remember that I found much of the course fairly easy which not everyone does. And I've become aware that I have to assess my accent, the speed at which I talk, to make it easy to understand. I share an office with Haydn Dobby who has been here much longer and has helped me in lots of ways, and starting alongside Katie has been great as we have both got up to speed together."

# Moving to Moodle

You may have heard that, for new students from 2017 onwards, ABDO College will be gradually moving all its courses to the Moodle online learning environment. In this article you can get the facts and find out how this might affect you.

Moodle is a learning platform designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with a single robust, secure and integrated system to create personalised learning environments. There are many different online learning environments, and ABDO College has selected Moodle because it is already in use in many other educational establishments, has a proven record of reliability and effectiveness, and will meet the needs of students and staff in the short and long term.

Simon Butterfield is responsible for implementing Moodle. He explains how it is going to be implemented and used: "We are going to start using Moodle for new students, initially only those on the Access courses starting in early 2017. Everything will be available to students on the online learning environment, instead of receiving handbooks by mail."

Moodle is as simple to use as many other online systems. Simon says, "You log on like any other online account. You then click on the

links to find the document you require. Moodle is simply a conduit – you complete the course as you would before, but you don't post your course work, you upload it to Moodle."

**'You log on like any other online account. You then click on the links to find the document you require.'**

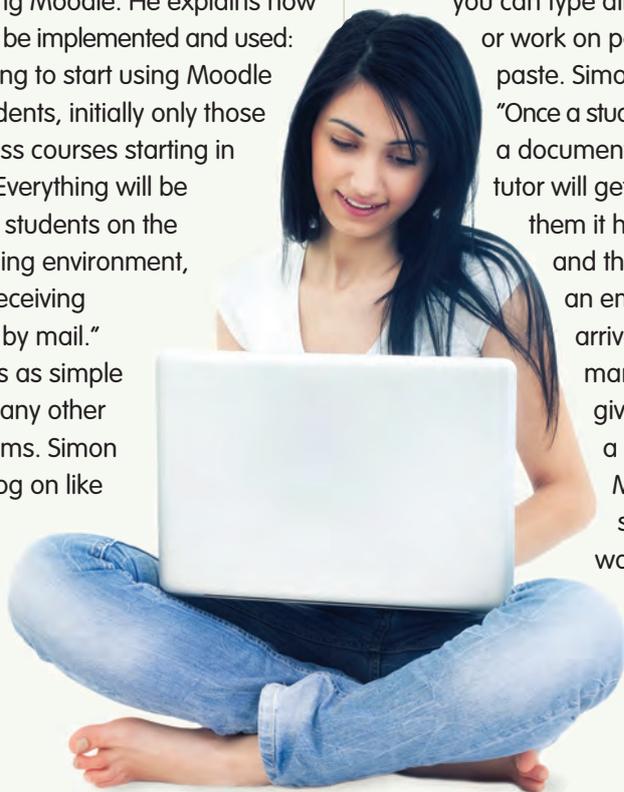
Moodle uses Word documents, so you can type directly into Word, or work on paper, scan and paste. Simon continues, "Once a student has uploaded a document to Moodle, the tutor will get an email to tell them it has uploaded, and the student gets an email to say it has arrived. The tutor will mark it, and can give feedback and a mark through Moodle. Moodle stores all your work, and at the end an answer guide will be released."

Any change can seem alarming, but the implementation of Moodle for ABDO College is carefully planned. No student will change their method of learning half way through the course. Simon says, "I will produce one page guides for everything students and tutors need to know – how to look at my feedback, for example."

There are lots of advantages to the new system. Students will no longer have to travel to post coursework nor pay for postage. Tutors will get instant access to work that has been uploaded

and can work wherever they are. Tutors will have training to allow them to learn how to use the system. Simon says, "We are running trial courses where some tutors will act as students, others will act as tutors to test it out. Moodle is designed around how our team want to interact with it. It is used by around 88 million people worldwide, and I'm looking forward to ensuring the College's delivery of the blended learning courses uses everything the 21st Century has to offer, making our future DOs ready for modern practice."

The aim is to use Moodle for diploma and foundation degree year 1 students starting in September 2017. Check out *Re:View* magazine for regular progress updates.





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