

# Re:View

Keeping excellence in your sights | June 2011 | Issue 7



**ABDO College celebrates its 10th anniversary!**

A decade of achievement – some highlights along the way

**The team is always our strength**

Colin Lee, Chairman of the ABDO College Board of Trustees, reflects on the past ten years

# The team is always our strength

I cannot believe we are celebrating ten years of the foundation of the College!

I well remember the continuing debate which started when I was ABDO President back in 1996. Past President Richard Harsant led a committee to look at the whole issue as ABDO had been unhappy with the quality of the service given to DO block release students at a number of colleges. The committee deliberated for about 12 months and concluded that the plans it wished to instigate did not really stack up financially; we therefore reluctantly put the issue on the back burner.

Unfortunately, over the next few years we continued to receive numerous complaints from students and especially from employers, usually the decision makers when placing students at a particular institution. Following the appointment of Tony Garrett as ABDO general secretary and the availability of suitable premises in Godmersham, the ABDO Council, under the leadership of Eric Hall, once more debated the whole issue and in the end made the decision to form ABDO College.

We were so fortunate to be able to appoint Jo Underwood as our Principal, who went on to establish the highest possible standards of teaching and organisation. The whole of the team

at the College have continued to live up to those standards and, I am pleased to say, the ABDO College is now considered to be the 'gold standard' in education for today's dispensing opticians.

As hopefully you will already know, over the last three years we have been able to form an alliance with Canterbury Christ Church University and have introduced degree courses, for both those that wish to become qualified DOs and now also for FBDOs, who already hold an ABDO Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing. We are so pleased to be able to offer career related degree courses and to demonstrate to the academic world in optics that an ophthalmic dispensing qualification is able to stand alongside any other higher optical qualification available in the UK!

The fact that we are now celebrating 10 years since establishing ABDO College is a great testament to the whole team based at Godmersham but especially to Jo Underwood as Principal and to Michelle Derbyshire who heads up our distance learning team. It is also testament to our financial managers, T Pavanakumar and his team who have enabled us to

fight to get the College into the black, something which, at long last, we have now successfully achieved.

It is sobering also to note that around 20 per cent of qualified dispensing opticians in the UK are now past students of the ABDO College! Obviously this number is constantly on the increase and we are sure the majority of the profession will, in the not too distant future, be past students of the College.

I would also like to take this opportunity to make special mention of Tony Garrett; he has led the whole organisation through a very difficult and hard period. He has managed the whole College organisation, he is always there for all the staff and the ABDO College Board of Trustees, as well as the ABDO Board, to help steer us through tricky waters, many of which we have encountered along the way!

Any organisation has to perform as a whole and we have certainly done that and whilst I must give great credit to a number of our key individuals; the team is always our strength.

**Colin Lee FBDO, Chairman,  
ABDO College Board of Trustees**

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# ABDO College celebrates its 10th anniversary!

## A decade of achievement – some highlights along the way.



2001: First group of students attending ABDO College at Godmersham



2001: Principal Jo Underwood

## 2001

With Jo Underwood appointed as Principal, ABDO College commences teaching distance learning students on 15 January 2001. 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 2001. Sixty students attend during this first academic year, along with approximately 25 students who attend examination revision courses for dispensing and contact lenses.

A further dispensing course is run on behalf of one of the major multiples.

Commencing in September 2001, all UK resident ABDO College distance learning students attend Godmersham for their block release studies. This results in 403 students attending, with the total student intake for the dispensing diploma course being 656.

The ABDO College Bookshop is established.

On behalf of Noville Optical, Frank Norville sponsors the *Norville Dispensing Suite* and supplies the College with assorted optical equipment.

## 2002

In March 2002 the annual 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 in Godmersham.

## 2003

The *Rodenstock Technology Library* is officially opened in December; thanks to the generous sponsorship of Rodenstock 20 PCs are installed into the College library thereby enabling students with the opportunity to view lecture, laboratory and practical session handouts, as well as PowerPoint presentations seen in lectures.

## 2004

Signet Armorlite become sponsors of the *Kodak Lens Optics Lab* and supply the College with laptop computers.

## 2008

ABDO College, working with Canterbury Christ Church University, launches a Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing course.

A team of students from ABDO College win the Essilor Challenge Trophy.



2003: Rodenstock's Chris Hunt and Jo Underwood at the official opening of the *Rodenstock Technology Library*



2009: The first employer liaison event



2010: The ABDO College team celebrate final approval for the BSc (Hons) 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 a completely new website: [www.abdocollege.org.uk](http://www.abdocollege.org.uk).

In October the College holds its first employer liaison event, with the key decision makers of major employers and other stakeholders attending.

## 2010

ABDO College successfully secures validation from Canterbury Christ Church University and final approval from the General Optical Council for its BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing course.

Transitions Optical become sponsors of the prizes awarded to the best students in Year 1 and Year 2 on the Foundation Degree courses.

Optinet, the IT division of the National Eyecare Group (NEG), become sponsors of the new *Dispensing Technology Suite* which is equipped with an Optinet practice

management system, as well as the Anyview Vertex dispensing system from BiB, Cerium's Mark III Colorimeter, electronic magnifiers from Bierley and lens demonstration and POS material from another new sponsor Younger Optics.

In November the College hosts its second annual employer liaison event which is well attended and provides valuable feedback from key figures in the retail sector.

## 2011

In January, working with Canterbury Christ Church University, ABDO College launches a BSc (Hons) in Optical Dispensing Studies course specifically designed for qualified DOs who are seeking to acquire a career related degree.

In February ABDO College holds its first ever Foundation Degree presentations.

Also in February ABDO holds a celebration reception at ABDO College in Godmersham for the first recipients of the BSc (Hons) in Optical Dispensing Studies degree.

In April ABDO College takes the opportunity to launch its newly published 2011/12 prospectus at Optrafair 2011.





# Communication skills

by Sally Bates BSc (Hons) FBDO Cert Ed, ABDO College Lecturer

Communicating with patients is one of the most important elements of a dispensing optician's professional employment. It is essential to be able to solve any optical associated problems and have extensive lens availability and product knowledge; however good communication skills are vital in order to convey information and interact with patients and fellow employees. Communication skills are currently a core competency of the FQE (Final Qualification Examination) Syllabus. Students are now examined on their communication skills, both in the written theoretical examination and Section D of the practical examinations. This article is written to help improve your customer service expertise through developing positive communication skills.

## The Basics

Communication is a transfer of information in three different ways:

1. Transmitting information
2. Accessing information
3. Imparting information

It is a two way process, between you and the patient.

In order to communicate effectively, we must pay attention to our social and interpersonal skills and thereby develop the following:

- Friendliness
- Confidence
- Diplomacy
- Non-aggressive manner
- Sense of humour
- Smile
- Listening and thinking prior to speaking
- Body language
- A positive attitude
- Asking relevant questions

REMEMBER – there are basically two different types of questions:

- Closed questions – Require a short influenced answer, often 'yes' or 'no'
- Open questions – Require a long influenced answer; open questions are those that start a sentence with: Who?, What?, When?, Where?, Why?, Which?, How?



For example: A patient is browsing at the designer frames in your practice (Figure 1); which of the following two approaches will most likely develop into a rapport with the patient and lead into a dispensing?

1. "Would you like any help at all?"
2. "Hi, how may I help you?"

**The answer should be obvious!**

Question 1 is a closed question – it only requires a short answer and the patient will probably say "No thanks". Question 2 is an open question – it requires a much more detailed answer; probably "Oh, I'm just looking at these frames".

This is a great lead into a conversation with the patient; we can then use phrases such as:

- "Why don't you try the square shaped frames? – they're very trendy"
- "Which particular shape did you have in mind? – why don't you try these?"
- "What colours do you prefer? – this shade will suit your colouring"

By using **open** questions, you have automatically **opened** a conversation with the patient. Then it is so much easier to obtain more information from the patient regarding **how** long ago was their last eye examination, **when** they were last tested, **where** were they last tested, **what** type of lenses they require, **which** frame styles they prefer, **what** type of tint they require, **which** sports they play etc.

## Ways of obtaining information

By using trigger words – Really?, Yes?, No?.

By using strategic words – copying what the patient says:

**Patient –**

"I like these Titanium frames and I want lenses that go dark in the sun, but they must also be good for driving at night"

**Optician –**

"So, we can fit the Titanium frame with Transitions adaptive lenses to your prescription, with an anti-reflection coating for night driving. Which would you prefer, the brown or grey lenses?"

# Body Language

Using positive body language is an effective method of communication – you may believe that you are the best optician, with the best technical knowledge, however if you use negative body language then you will not appear as a good communicator or achieve the best dispensing results.

## Top tips on how to use body language

### 1. Eye contact

is one of the most important aspects of dealing with others. Maintaining good eye contact shows respect and interest in what they have to say. In the UK we tend to keep eye contact around 60–70 per cent of the time; however, there are wide cultural differences, so be careful in other countries. By doing this you won't make other people feel self-conscious. Instead, it will give them a feeling of comfort and genuine warmth in your company, any more eye contact than this and you can be too intense, any less and you give off a signal that you are lacking interest in them or their conversation.

**Figure 2:** Recognition – eye contact and the head tilted slightly back, the body language says *'hello, I remember you'*



### 2. Posture

is the next thing to master, correct posture is important you will automatically start feeling better as it instantly gives you the 'feel good' factor.

**Figure 3:** Ambivalent appearance, slouching posture, the body language says *'Am I bothered?'*



**Figure 4:** Positive appearance and open posture, the body language says *'I'm interested'*



Next time you notice you are feeling a bit down, take a look at how you're standing or sitting. Chances are you'll be slouched, with your shoulders drooping down and inwards. This collapses the chest and inhibits good breathing, which in turn can make you feel nervous and uncomfortable. Confident people both stand and sit upright, with their shoulders back and their chins held up.

### 3. Head position

is great for role play with yourself and others. When you want to feel confident and self-assured keep your head level both horizontally and vertically. You can also use this straight head position when you want to be authoritative and taken seriously. Conversely, when you want to be friendly and in the listening, receptive mode, tilt your head just a little to one side or other (figure 5). You can shift the tilt from left to right at appropriate points in the conversation, but not too often.

**Figure 5:** Head posture slightly tilted and a welcoming smile, this body language says *'I'm welcoming, friendly and willing to listen'*



**Figure 6:** Head posture slightly tilted a grumpy face and arms crossed, this body language says *'I'm miserable, don't hassle me and leave me alone'*



### 4. Arms

give away the clues as to how open and receptive we are to everyone we meet and interact with, so keep your arms out to the side of your body or behind your back (figure 7). This shows that you are not scared to take on whatever comes your way and that you meet things head on.

**Figure 7:** This is 'open' body language says *'I'm approachable, friendly and sociable'*.



**Figure 8:** This is 'closed' body language says *'Don't approach me, I'm unavailable'*.



In general terms the more outgoing you are as a person, the more you tend to use your arms with big movements. The quieter you are the less you move your arms away from your body. So, try to strike a natural balance and keep your arm movement's midway. When you want to come across in the best possible light, crossing of the arms is a big no in front of the patients (figure 8).



### 5. Legs

are a distance away from the brain consequently they are the hardest parts of our bodies to consciously control (figure 9). They tend to move around far more than normal when we are nervous, stressed or being deceptive. So it is best to keep them as still as possible in most situations, especially at interviews or work meetings unless hidden. Be careful in the manner that you cross your legs. Do you cross at the knees, or at the ankles or do you bring your leg up to rest on the knee of the other? This is more a question of comfort than anything else.



**Figure 9:** From left to right, the first chap is obviously laid back, tired or can't be bothered. The chap in the centre appears nervous and worried or uptight. The chap on the right appears to be tired of waiting; his body language says *'I've been waiting all day'*. Is this how your patients look when they are waiting for their eye examination appointment?

### 6. The angle of the body

in relation to others gives an indication of our attitudes and feelings towards them. We usually angle towards people that we find attractive, friendly and interesting and angle ourselves away from those we do not. Angles includes leaning in or away from people, as we often just tilt from the pelvis and lean sideways to someone to share a bit of conversation.

### 7. Hand gestures

are so numerous it is difficult to give a brief guide.



**Figure 10:** Palms slightly up and outward is perceived as being open and friendly.



**Figure 11:** Twiddling your thumbs signals boredom, or even greed so never use these hand movements when helping patients to select frames, or asking the patient *'how would you like to pay?'*



**Figure 12:** May signify lying or deceit, never cover your mouth when you talk to your patients.

Palm down gestures are generally seen as dominant, emphasising and possibly aggressive, especially when there is no movement or bending between the wrist and the forearm. The 'palm up, palm down' is very important when it comes to handshaking (figure 13).



**Figure 13:** A handshake gives away all sorts of clues about a person's personality. Those individuals with a firm handshake are interpreted as being strong characters, where as those with limp handshakes as taken as being weak and ineffective.

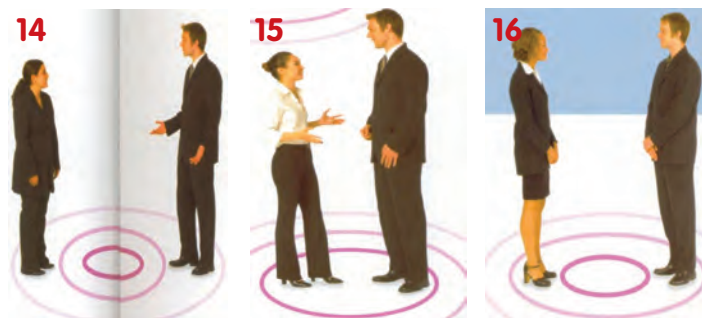


### 8. Distance from others

is crucial if you want to give off the right signals. Stand or sit too far away and you'll be 'Keeping your distance' or 'Stand offish' (figure 14). Stand too close and you'll be marked as 'Pushy' or 'In your face' (figure 15). Neither are good signs, try to observe if you're in a group situation how close the other people are to each other. Also notice if you move closer to someone and they back away then you are probably in their personal space, which is in their comfort zone. You need to read the signs and step back.

**Figure 16:** Shows the correct distance to stand from your patient, this is usually approximately arm's length.

When dispensing you reach forward to touch the frame, fit the spectacles or measure a PD, you are suddenly entering the patient's personal zone. Ensure that your hands and nails are clean, and they don't smell of your lunch or nicotine! Personally, I always wear perfume on my wrists then as I reach forwards to dispense the patient, hence they smell Chanel eau de toilette scent.



### 9. Ears

play a vital role in communication with others; however, as you have two ears and only one mouth, try to use them in that order. If you listen twice as much as you talk you come across as a good communicator. It shows how to strike up a balanced conversation without being 'me, me, me' or too timid.

**Figure 17:** Touching the ear can be a form of scratching an itch; however it may signify that you have had enough of listening to the patient.



### 10. Mouth movements

can give away all sorts of clues. There are also different types of smiles and each gives off a corresponding feeling to its recipient. Remember, a smile breaks the ice and patients usually smile back at you. **Figure 18** is the 'crocodile smile' – a false grin and fake, compared to a genuine welcoming smile (**figure 19**).



## So, remember...

#### NOTHING CROSSED

Keep arms, legs, and feet relaxed and uncrossed. Also, if you are wearing a jacket, wear it unbuttoned as it relays the message 'I am open and honest'.

#### LEAN FORWARD

Move within six to eight feet of your patient; lean slightly forward. Interested people always pay attention and lean forward, leaning backwards demonstrates aloofness or rejection.

#### MIRRORING

Pay attention to your patient's breathing and the pace that they are talking at (is it fast or slow?) then mirror them. If they cross their legs...slowly do the same.

#### DIRECT EYE CONTACT

Direct eye contact is a compliment to most people and builds trust in you. But be aware of the customs of people from other countries, as this may be a sign of disrespect.

#### HANDSHAKE

Not too hard and not too soft and pay great attention to how you are shaking someone's hand.



## Official ABDO College sponsors

The ABDO College Board of Trustees and staff would like to thank its official sponsors for their generous and continued support:

**BIB Ophthalmic Instruments**

**Bierley**

**Buchmann UK Limited**

**Carl Zeiss Vision UK Ltd**

**Cerium Group Ltd**

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**Rodenstock (UK) Ltd**

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**Transitions Optical**

**The Worshipful Company  
of Spectacle Makers**

**Younger Optics**

For further information on ABDO College sponsorship opportunities contact Michael R Potter FBDO on 01227 733 913 or email at [mpotter@abdo.org.uk](mailto:mpotter@abdo.org.uk).

## Jo Underwood is awarded ABDO Life Membership



James Russell and Jo Underwood with their ABDO Life Membership awards

At the recent ABDO 25th anniversary luncheon at Plaisterers' Hall in London, ABDO College Principal, Jo Underwood and her husband James Russell were both surprised and extremely delighted to be awarded Life Membership of the Association. The awards, which were presented by ABDO President Jennifer Brower, recognised the enormous contributions both have made to the dispensing profession over many years.

Jo has played a vitally important role in the establishment, continued development and success of ABDO College, her work with the ABDO Academic Committee, ABDO Examinations and as a representative of the profession on the GOC Education Committee are acknowledged and greatly appreciated by the Association.

James is a visiting Lecturer to ABDO College and a Past President of the Association, he also represents dispensing opticians on the General Optical Council, he is Vice-Chairman of the Eyecare Trust and an ABDO examiner, the Association sincerely expressed its thanks for his dedication to the profession with the Life Membership award.

It is a fitting tribute that both Jo and James that they should receive this rightly deserved accolade in ABDO's 25th and ABDO College's 10th anniversary year.

## Foundation Degree presentations



First group of students with their foundation degrees



Second group of students with their foundation degrees

In 2008 ABDO College, working with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU), introduced a Foundation Degree course in Ophthalmic Dispensing. Following the success of the first students to complete the course, earlier this year ABDO College hosted two presentation evenings whilst students were attending the College in Godmersham on block release. Both events were hosted by ABDO College Principal, Jo Underwood.

At the first event students were individually awarded their Foundation Degree certificates by Professor Kate Springett of CCCU and congratulated by Jo Underwood and at the second event students received their certificates from Professor Hazel Colyer, Dean of CCCU and were also personally congratulated by ABDO President, Jennifer Brower.

Commenting on presentations Jo Underwood said "These are the first-ever Foundation Degrees awarded to our students and they represent a milestone for ABDO College. I am extremely proud of our students' achievements and sincerely thank my colleagues at CCCU, along with my own staff, for making this academic programme become a reality."

The students are now undertaking their third and final year of studies and are looking forward to acquiring both their BSc (Hons) degree and FBDO qualifications later this year.

## Best 2nd year student prize

A presentation was held, during his last block release session at ABDO College, to award Richard Gray with the 2009/10 prize for Best 2nd year student on the Foundation Degree course. Richard, who works at Specsavers Opticians in Swansea, attained the highest average module mark for the year and is the first receiptient of the new 2nd year student prize.

Richard commenced his career in optics five years ago at the age of 17 and once he has successfully attained his BSc (Hons) and FBDO qualifications will consider furthering his education by undertaking the Contact Lens Certificate course.

The Foundation Degree prize is generously sponsored by Transitions Optical and Richard received a cheque for £500, from Transitions product consultant Vinni Viridi FBDO, together with a commemorative certificate from ABDO College Principal Jo Underwood.



Richard Gray and Vinni Viridi



## ODS degree celebration reception

On Saturday 26 February the Association of British Dispensing Opticians hosted a lunchtime celebration reception at ABDO College to congratulate the first group of dispensing opticians to attain the new BSc (Hons) qualification in Optical Dispensing Studies (ODS). Earlier in the day the group, which included ABDO College academic staff, course tutors and ABDO examiners, attended a graduation ceremony at Canterbury Christ Church University.

Toasting their success ABDO general secretary Tony Garrett said "ABDO is extremely proud of your achievement which marks another step forward in the development of the dispensing profession. Having now made the BSc (Hons) in Optical



ODS degree graduates celebrate their success

Dispensing Studies course available through ABDO College to all its FBDO qualified members, the Association

looks forward to a greater number of DOs acquiring a degree to assist their personal career development".

## Upgraded library IT facilities

The *Rodenstock Technology Library*, which continues to be one of the most popular facilities at the College, has recently been refurbished with upgrades to the IT suite and the installation of purpose designed computer desks that allow monitors to be stored under the desk top when not in use. Following the new upgrades to the IT suite, each of the 20 PCs now has a wireless mouse and keyboard as well as a new flat screen monitor; in addition, the Rodenstock Impression Consulting Tool software has been installed.

Amongst its many features the Impression Consulting Tool displays high quality graphics that outline comparisons between different lenses



Ian Harrison demonstrates the Rodenstock Impression Consulting Tool in the College library

types (e.g. conventional and individualised progressive lenses) and, importantly, will assist opticians in highlighting product benefits to their patients.

Visiting the library at ABDO College, Ian Harrison FBDO, Rodenstock's national sales manager commented "I am confident that the consulting software will actively help students in developing their product knowledge and dispensing skills. It is now possible to design lenses for an individual's needs, be it enhanced reading lenses, progressive or sports lenses. The software also features an interface with the new WinFit Reference ordering solution. Rodenstock is delighted to be associated with ABDO College and to be able to promote the advantages of new lens technology to the next generation of the profession".

# ABDO College Bookshop

## **Make the ABDO College Bookshop your first choice:**

- Dispensing, optometry, ophthalmology and contact lens books
- Rules, gauges and charts
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