

# Re:View

Keeping excellence in your sights | September 2013 | Issue 15



## The Student's Perspective

The benefits of a BSc in  
Optical Dispensing Studies

## Jan Jensen interview

There's more to training DOs than many  
people think!

## Profile feature: Anna Foden

We find out about Anna's research  
into Down's Syndrome

# Show us your college!



Whilst I was recently at Godmersham for a board meeting of the College trustees, I took the opportunity and strolled through the grounds on a glorious summers day, I must confess to feelings of envy towards those that work or study in this sublime place. What a wonderful environment and what brilliant students the College is producing.

In this edition of *Re:View* there is a profile of former student Anna Foden. Anna started as an optical assistant and is now not only a qualified DO but has an honours degree in ophthalmic dispensing. A prime example of the careers ladder being fit for purpose. Her research project for her degree, concerning dispensing for children with Downs Syndrome, is a fascinating piece of work and a tribute to the education that ABDO College provides. There is an interview with Jan Jansen, a principal lecturer at Canterbury Christ Church University and a students' perspective on the ODS degree course. The difference with students on the ODS course is that they are qualified DOs who have returned to study.

Also featured is the retirement party for Rowena Shipley, ABDO College's former courses coordinator, who will be much missed, but thankfully we will still be seeing her in the future as an examiner and tutor. I am delighted that her successor is Gill Elstub who we wish all the very best in her new role.

Finally, you will probably know by now, due to its Jane Austen connection Godmersham Park will feature on the new £10 note in 2017. This led me to a couple of thoughts, firstly the vision of our students waving a wad of these notes and shouting "show us your college". This comes with my apologies to those too young to remember Harry Enfield and his 'Loadsamoney' character. Secondly, what might this note be called? Various names for the tenner currently are a 'Paul Mckenna', 'Ayrton Senna' and my favourite a 'Pavarotti' (ie a tenor)! But I hope that in the in the dispensing profession we will know it as a 'Tony' (ie Garrett, in recognition of his prime role in the creation of a permanent educational establishment for dispensing opticians at Godmersham Park).

Enjoy this issue of *Re:View* and what's left of the summer.

**Huntly Taylor FBDO, Chairman,  
ABDO College Board of Trustees**

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# An interview with Jan Jensen

## Principal lecturer at CCCU's Department of Allied Health Professions

There is much more to the training of dispensing opticians than many people think. In recent years, ABDO College has been working in conjunction with Canterbury Christ Church University in Kent to provide the Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Dispensing as well as the BSc in Optical Dispensing Studies for qualified dispensing opticians. In the second of a series of articles looking in depth at the academics involved at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) we meet Jan Jensen, a principal lecturer in the Department of Allied Health Professions. She is the team lead for occupational therapy education within the department, and also oversees academic quality and standards and processes for the CCCU ophthalmic dispensing courses run in conjunction with ABDO College at Godmersham.

Excellent academic quality and standards and processes are one of the key outcomes of the relationship between ABDO College and CCCU. Jan explains her role, "I meet on a regular basis with Anthony Blackman, the academic link tutor for ABDO College and CCCU, and less frequently with ABDO College staff, to identify processes to help staff at ABDO College to embed standards of CCCU. I attend programme management meetings, and we also have programme management committees where employers and students report back. I use this information to monitor areas to improve on, areas of good practice. I attend exam boards, so I can consider issues around assessment, pass rates of modules – this gives me points to be discussing in programme

management teams. The percentage of students progressing through the different modules is a good quality monitoring tool to help us evaluate the programme too. We have an annual review meeting which I've chaired, involving the programme team and other departments in the university. This helps us make sure every programme is set up well; that we are all meeting our commitments; and that resources are adequate. It is also a time to assess risks and benefits of partnership."

Jan's background is that of occupational therapy. She says, "I qualified in New Zealand and worked mostly in the field of neurology with children as well as adults. I then moved to England. I was based in London initially, and worked with people who had had strokes, those with MS, older people, and eventually older people with dementia. I then moved to Kent and after working on rehab wards I started work with Kent Social Services working on home adaptations for people with long

term conditions and neurological disorders. This obviously brought me into contact with people with disabilities that included sight loss, so I have an awareness of low vision aids, lighting and contrast, and how it can be used to make people's lives easier on a day to day basis. On the surface it seems that there might not be much affiliation between optics and occupational therapy but my experience in this area has shown just how much overlap there is. What's more, both occupational therapy and dispensing optics are professions that need to build their public identity. Patients are extremely grateful when they understand what we do, but often start with little knowledge of the profession and how it can help them. However, my OT qualifications are not the reason I work with ABDO College: that is more due to in my position as a senior member in the Allied Health Professions Department."

## The ABDO College scarf

The ABDO College scarf is available for both current and past students to keep warm this winter and wear with pride! The 10" x 72" scarf is produced using Saxony wool on the front with the ABDO College logo embroidered in the central stripe and has a plain soft black fleece on the back.

The price of this top quality scarf is now only £19.95 plus £2.50 postage and packing. To place your order call the ABDO College Bookshop on 01227 733 904, or order online via the ABDO College Bookshop section on the ABDO College website.



There are a number of benefits for dispensing opticians and students from working across professions within the Allied Health Professions Department. Jan says, "In the time that I have been associated with the programmes there has been quite a change. When we first linked up, ABDO College had very smooth and well developed processes for their diploma work and all the other educational provision that they offered. It must have been hard for them to have to adopt the university standards and regulations, and there has been an incredible willingness to do this. We've learnt from each other particularly in the distance learning provision where we have learnt from ABDO College."

Students at ABDO College are also benefitting from the link with CCCU. Jan Jensen says, "In the students themselves there has been a big change. They are not on campus, but we are seeing them identifying themselves more as CCCU students in their work, in attendance at graduation, in the more academically aligned modules. Initially students might have asked, 'Why are we looking for an evidence base?', but many of the posters they have researched during the second year of the course show that their research skills have been embedded to great advantage, raising their standard of work enormously."

I've attended the ABDO College employer liaison event for a couple of years where some graduates present their individual projects. They have done us proud with excellent presentations. The quality of their work has again shown incredibly clearly how they have



Jan Jensen

embedded that learning and the recommendations for practice into their employment. That's been really exciting to see that come through in a short period of time. Two of the graduates presented at Optrafair this year, and one has gone on to publish a short paper. Drawing parallels with other professions, this academic development moves the scope for practice by dispensing opticians at a time when other professionals need to be used in a different way in terms of cost effectiveness and what they can contribute to the patient pathway.

"We are approaching revalidation of the programme. This is required by the GOC and the university. The course is evaluated, refreshed, and right now we are looking at the need to put more business orientation into the current programme, and the need to embrace health promotion much more. This came up during staff consultations within and outside profession. The staff group are welcoming the opportunity to do that. We see the interest in health promotion

paralleled in all the other programmes across the faculty."

Ophthalmic dispensing students acquire many skills as they progress through the course. Jan Jensen explains, "As an outsider, there is a move from being technically oriented to becoming more enquiring about how else practice can be, how else practice can influence people's lives. There is a big alignment there with occupational therapy. We start to see students ask, 'Is there something more we can be doing, are there people we can reach more effectively?' ABDO are pushing these agendas and we in the partnership are mindful and are embedding these issues in the modules. We see a real thirst for learning in some of the students. This has led us to consider what next after degree level, and ABDO are keen to look at this issue. A key question for us to address right now is whether we can bring in masters level and on-going CPD courses so people can move on through their professional career with academic basis."

When asked about the future for dispensing optics, Jan Jensen says, "One of the next areas to move into for the profession is more research-based practice. When we are asking students to look for evidence to support their assignment, the current evidence base is fairly limited. We and ABDO and ABDO College have identified this as an area for work. These graduates will have research skills and we need to help them to keep those skills, as consumers of evidence and equally we would like a proportion of them to do active research and generate evidence that will be used by others."

# Can prescribing and dispensing bifocals in high street practice significantly impact quality of life for young people with Downs Syndrome?

by Anna Foden BSc(Hons) FBDO

## According to the GOC

‘A dispensing optician advises on, fits and supplies the most appropriate spectacles after taking account of each patient’s visual, lifestyle and vocational needs’.

(GOC, 2012).

Part of working in optometric practice is interacting with a wide range of patients with varied requirements. Some patients may have special needs or learning difficulties and understanding how their vision may affect their everyday life can enable us to provide a better service.

When dealing with children with Down’s Syndrome, a deeper understanding of how the spectacles prescribed can affect the life of a child and those around them can lead to providing a better service to the patient.

Although understanding and attitudes towards people with Down’s Syndrome have changed dramatically over the years (Quinn, 1997) it is still perhaps easy to make assumptions about what people with learning difficulties can and can’t achieve or may want to be able to.

The question posed here is whether dispensing bifocals to young people with Down’s Syndrome in high street practices as opposed to specialised clinics (thereby shortening the chain of health care professionals involved in their care) can have a significant effect on their quality of life.

When it comes to inclusive mainstream education and access to the workplace for people with learning difficulties there are challenges ranging from prejudice to policy changes. However, the positive impact of education on quality of life is established and there is significant evidence that this is as true for people with learning difficulties as it is for the general population.

One way in which to have an impact on mainstream inclusion would be to make the prescribing and dispensing of bifocals widespread in high street optometric practices rather than having to rely on referrals and specialist clinics.

The long term effects of wearing bifocals for young people with Down’s Syndrome are still unclear with some research stating that they can be used as an effective treatment for reduced accommodation and other research not finding evidence to support this conclusion. The reasons behind many young people with Down’s Syndrome having reduced accommodation are still not understood (Al Bagdady et al

2009) and further research into this area could be beneficial in informing how it can be treated.

However, what does seem clear is that bifocals, whether they constitute correction or treatment, are an effective tool in improving near vision and abling young people with Down’s Syndrome to achieve more than they may otherwise be able to.

The process of analysing research and evidence reviewed for this article has led to the conclusion that dispensing bifocals to young people with Down’s Syndrome can have a significant effect on their near vision. This has a directly measurable impact on their performance in education and this can have a profound effect upon their quality of life as a child and throughout their life.

If prescribing and dispensing bifocals to young people with Down’s Syndrome can become a standard part of high street practice, it could bring that hope of providing better care to people with learning difficulties much closer to reality. (Main article overleaf)

## AIMS

The ophthalmic problem focused on in this work is that of reduced accommodation. Over 75 per cent of children with Down's Syndrome fail to accommodate accurately on near targets which must result in optically blurred images for near work (Stewart, Woodhouse and Trojanowska, 2005).

There is research to suggest that bifocals can be an effective intervention for the accommodative problems experienced by many young people with Down's Syndrome (Stewart, Woodhouse and Trojanowska, 2005; Al-Bagdady et al, 2009)

The question posed here is whether dispensing bifocals to young people with Down's Syndrome in high street practices as opposed to specialised clinics (thereby shortening the chain of health care professionals involved in their care) can have a significant effect on their quality of life.

## RESULTS

Buckley & Bird (2000) produced a paper entitled '*Education for individuals with Down's Syndrome – an overview*' in which they investigated the benefits and disadvantages of mainstream versus special schooling. Their research found that inclusive education offered the best opportunities for children with Down's Syndrome with significant gains for expressive language skills and academic achievements.

Research into the effects of using bifocals for young people with Down's Syndrome has shown that they can be an effective intervention (Stewart, Woodhouse and Trojanowska, 2005; Al-Bagdady et al, 2009; Nandakumar and Leat, 2010) and that, in improving an individuals ability to focus on near work, there is often a corresponding improvement in their educational performance (Nandakumar and Leat, 2010).

Giving a young person with learning difficulties the best visual correction possible can have a far reaching effect on many aspects of their life. They may do better in school and generally show an improvement in self confidence which can in turn have a positive effect on family and social interaction (Summers et al 2005).

## METHOD

An extensive literature review was carried out in order to answer the questions posed in this article. Literature was reviewed to ensure that the it was of a high standard according to the hierarchy of evidence (Aveyard, 2010) and then critiqued in order to assess relevance to the research question and ensure the reliability and quality of the work (Law et al, no date).

Increasingly within medical and clinical professions an emphasis is being placed on the concept of patient-centred care, that is 'providing care that is respectful of and responsive to individual patient preferences, needs, and values, and ensuring that patient values guide all clinical decisions' (Kingsfund, 2011)

According to the GOC 'A dispensing optician advises on, fits and supplies the most appropriate spectacles after taking account of each patient's visual, lifestyle and vocational needs'. (GOC, 2012) Part of working in optometric practice is interacting with a wide range of patients with varied requirements. Some patients may have special needs or learning difficulties and understanding how their vision may affect their everyday life can enable us to provide a better service.

When dealing with children with Down's Syndrome, a deeper understanding of how the spectacles prescribed can affect the life of a child and those around them can lead to providing a better service to the patient.



The World Health Organisation defines quality of life as: 'Individuals' perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns.

It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the person's physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships, personal beliefs and their relationship to salient features of their environment' (WHO, 1997).

The link between basic education and quality of life has been established in many studies (Ross and Van Willigan, 1997; Wheymeyer et al 2005; Summers et al 2005). This work is looking at this correlation specifically amongst people with Down's Syndrome and the possibility that the use of bifocals may directly affect this.

Although understanding and attitudes towards people with Down's Syndrome have changed dramatically over the years (Quinn, 1997) it is still perhaps easy to make assumptions about what people with learning difficulties can and can't achieve or may want to be able to.

For the paper '*Understanding attitudes towards people with Down's Syndrome*', the National Center on Birth Defects and Development Disabilities, Atlanta, Georgia, collected data via a large scale survey with over 6,000 respondents. Logistic regression was used to analyse the results and record their findings.

The results of this research indicate the US General public continue to hold negative attitudes towards people with Down's Syndrome and their inclusion in both school and work environments with significant numbers of people believing that people with Down's Syndrome should attend separate schools (30.2 per cent of youth respondents and 25.3 per cent of adult respondents) (Pace et al 2010)

By showing that education is of great importance in developing the skills required to allow an individual to reach their full potential and have the possibility of leading an independent adult life, the value of providing the tools to allow that to happen can be established.

In an article for Cardiff University magazine, Margaret Woodhouse is quoted as stating how the difficulty in focusing on near tasks experienced by children with Down's Syndrome "has huge implications for learning in school as the books they're trying to learn to read and the work they're trying to do is out of focus" (Palmer, 2011, p.19).



Research by Stewart, Woodhouse and Trojanowska, (2005) and Nandakumar & Leat (2010) has established that the use of bifocals for young people with Down's Syndrome is effective.

Nandakumar & Leat (2010, p.203) state that 'Bifocals provide

clear near vision in DS (Down's Syndrome) children with reduced accommodation' and Stewart, Woodhouse and Trojanowska (2005, p.514) conclude that 'Bifocals confer benefit to children with Down's Syndrome who under-accommodate both directly (better focusing through the bifocal) and indirectly (by encouraging improved accommodation through the distance part of the lens).'

The research conducted by Nandakumar & Leat (2010) looks at the relationship between bifocals, visual acuity, accommodation and early literacy skills in children with Down's Syndrome. A descriptive, longitudinal, individual case-controlled study was the method used to obtain evidence for this research article.



Nandakumar & Leat (2010, p. 203) conclude that the use of bifocals resulted in 'superior focusing, better near VA, improved literacy skills... and enhanced school performance' although they did

not find any evidence of improved accommodation through the distance portion of the lens. They do acknowledge that this may be due to the comparatively short length of the study (five months) in comparison to the study conducted by Al Bagdady et al (2009).

In improving the patient's near vision it has been shown that there is often a corresponding improvement in reading and general performance in school.

Nandakumar & Leat (2010, p.199–200) report in their findings that 'one participant improved two reading grade levels in the term following bifocal prescription, another from grade 2 to grade 5 reading levels, another participant who could identify numbers only from 1–10 improved to identifying 25 numbers in the term after bifocals were prescribed. In addition, one participant moved from grade 4 to grade 6 at school as a result of improved performance on reading skills.'

Although the research by Stewart, Woodhouse and Trojanowska (2005) and Nandakumar & Leat (2010) both confirm the effectiveness of wearing bifocals by providing clear near vision, they differ in their conclusions regarding the long term effects of bifocal wear with Stewart, Woodhouse and Trojanowska (2005, p.519) stating that 'children wearing bifocals... were able to accommodate more accurately when looking through the distance portion of the bifocal lens when compared to the control group' ( $p < 0.05$ ).

They also state that 'it is reasonable to assume that improving accommodative performance in children will make near work easier and advance their learning potential.'

The long term effects of wearing bifocals for young people with Down's Syndrome are still unclear with some research stating that they can be used as an effective treatment for reduced accommodation and other research not finding evidence to support this conclusion. The reasons behind many young people with Down's Syndrome having reduced accommodation are still not understood (Al Bagdady et al 2009) and further research into this area could be beneficial in informing how it can be treated.

## DISCUSSION

The process of analysing research and evidence reviewed for this article has led to the conclusion that dispensing bifocals to young people with Down's Syndrome can have a significant effect on their near vision. This has a directly measurable impact on their performance in education and this can have a profound effect upon their quality of life as a child and throughout their life.

In 2009 a continuing education pack issued by Healthcall Optical services aimed to make it easier for optometrists to offer the eye care that people with learning disabilities need. One of the authors, Margaret Woodhouse, stated that: "My hope is that the pack will encourage more optometrists to build up expertise in providing eye care to people with learning disabilities and help widen access... In turn, this will lead to better eye care for this population and far fewer people with learning disability being additionally handicapped by poor eye sight". (Look Up, 2009)

If prescribing and dispensing bifocals to young people with Down's Syndrome can become a standard part of high street practice, it could bring that hope of providing better care to people with a learning difficulties much closer to reality.

As a dispensing optician working in practice we have a responsibility to provide appropriate care to our patients (GOC, 2012). One way in which to do this is to be aware of developments within our field and strive to apply these wherever they can make a difference to our patients' lives.

# Anna Foden

We find out about Anna and her research



Anna Foden

Last year Anna Foden attained the FBDO qualification and her BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing with ABDO College in association with Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU). Her final year project examined the benefits of prescriptions for bifocals for children with Down's Syndrome. In the first of a regular series, we find out more about Anna and her research. In this issue of *Re: View* you can learn more about her research project and recommendations that you can use in practice.

Anna Foden joined Specsavers as an optical assistant, but she always had the dispensing qualification in mind. She says, "I started working at Specsavers around eighteen months to two years before I started the dispensing optics course. Right from at the interview stage I was told I could move up and get further qualifications. Working in practice only made me more interested in pursuing a career in dispensing."

Everyone starts the dispensing optics course from a different background and finds different parts of the course a challenge. Anna says, "The course included a lot more maths than I'd expected, but I got help to prepare for this even before I started. I'd done some higher education before so I had experience of attending lectures which helps." Taking part in a course while working can be testing. Anna explains, "I found it was challenging juggling work and study. It was slightly stressful keeping it all going together. It doesn't leave a lot of room for a social life. It was a great help that I knew people who had gone through it before. I was lucky enough to be doing the course with another girl from the same practice, and when I went into the second year we had someone from the practice starting in the first year."

I didn't know the basis for why that prescription was given. I asked the optometrist to explain and that piqued my interest." Anna also had a personal interest in the topic and she talks with enthusiasm on the subject: "When I was considering the idea, I realised that my mum does a lot of adult literacy and numeracy classes including some with people with Down's Syndrome. Through those classes I've seen just how if you give people the opportunity they can do much more than you expect. It can really make a big difference if you give people the chance. If bifocals make it easier for someone to read, that can open up life opportunities for them."

For anyone on the BSc course, the research project comes with a number of hurdles. Anna describes her own experience: "There were definitely blocks. I found it hard to get started and

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**"One day I dispensed bifocals for a child with Down's Syndrome and I realised that I didn't know the basis for why that prescription was given."**

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Everyone who takes part in the course needs to complete a final year project as part of their BSc (Hons) in Ophthalmic Dispensing. Anna explains how she chose to study research on the benefits of prescriptions for bifocals for children with Down's Syndrome. She says, "I bounced around various ideas. I looked at topics that I was interested in, and things that were related to practice. One day I dispensed bifocals for a child with Down's Syndrome and I realised that

settle on a topic. When I started looking for background research there were many dead ends. Depending on how I limited my search I could find far too much, or papers that were not specific enough, or nothing at all. Once I'd settled on the topic, though and knew what avenue I wanted to explore, it became easier. Having access to the CCCU library was really helpful. I could access the full article for most of the papers I needed via their resources."

## Rowena retires

Anna's key findings from her research project are described in more detail on the previous pages. She sums up, "There is a lot of evidence to support prescribing bifocals to improve accommodation for young people with Down's Syndrome. Those findings have linked into how allowing people with DS access to mainstream education and improving their results could have a big impact on leading an independent adult life." Anna's research project has become a topic of discussion in her practice. She says, "Although people with Down's Syndrome are a small sector of all our patients, it's nice to have more knowledge of why we're doing what we're doing. I've discussed the research with our optometrists. Several studied with Dr Margaret Woodhouse at Cardiff University. We're all more aware of what can be done now and why."

There are wider lessons for every person involved in optics from Anna's research. She says, "After carrying out the project I would suggest that dispensing opticians need a better understanding of why things are prescribed. Now, if the parents or carers have questions I can answer them. It gives the patients a better service. Having a better understanding of what I'm doing and why is also more fulfilling."

Anna's course has definitely inspired her to do more. She says, "I hope to start the contact lens course in September. That will be my next thing. Right now, I'm enjoying my work in practice as a DO. Writing the article for *Re:View* is exciting too and I hope this leads to more."



**A special party was recently held at Godmersham to celebrate the retirement of Rowena Shipley from her role as courses coordinator. Rowena held the post for over ten years and during that time made an outstanding contribution to the courses offered by ABDO College. She hands over the position to Gill Elstub, who now has a new joint role as courses coordinator and part-time lecturer at ABDO College.**

**Thanked for her efforts by ABDO general secretary Tony Garrett and ABDO College Principal, Jo Underwood, Rowena was presented with several retirement gifts, together with commemorative poster signed by her colleagues and College staff. In response Rowena said that she had found the role extremely rewarding and had acquired new skill sets along the way, as well as a BSc (Hons) degree.**

**Although she is 'retiring' Rowena will continue to play an active role in various support activities for ABDO College and as an ABDO examiner.**

## 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:

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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).

## The Student's Perspective

### How a BSc in Optical Dispensing Studies can provide an experienced professional with a fresh outlook

Have you seen that dispensing opticians can now study for a degree level qualification? Many new trainees are opting to study for a degree, but qualified DOs can also study for a BSc degree in Optical Dispensing Studies with ABDO College, one that takes into account their existing qualifications and experience and can be combined with work in practice.

Helen Nicols is one such DO who decided to study for a degree. She says, "I work for Specsavers in Southampton as a contact lens optician (CLO). I've been there for 10 years, and part of my job involves training other DOs in the practical side of the contact lens course. Now you can do a BSc in Ophthalmic Dispensing I felt that I didn't want to be

never too late to learn. I could see that the course would benefit me and benefit the practice."

Going back to study can present challenges so we asked Helen how she got on. She says, "I hadn't done any formal study since the end of my contact lens course. I had to get back into the habit and not leave things to the last minute. If anything we had more time to complete the course assessments than I expected. In the last month I have put hours in to submit my last essay, but other months the time commitment hasn't been so much." Simon explains further, "I read vast amounts of information and could spend days preparing for an essay, but that was because I enjoyed the reading enormously. Actually writing

"I found the teaching skills part of the course particularly helpful. I learned about understanding people's motivations and how to apply this knowledge when passing on skills in a workplace environment."

training people better qualified than me so I decided to get a degree myself. Applying was a bit of a scramble. I saw the opportunity right at the end of December 2010 and the closing date was mid-January. I applied, and very quickly I was on the course."

Simon Pinnington is a dispensing optician and director at Specsavers, Hounslow. He chose the course for personal skill development. He says, "I have children at university, but it's

the essay was relatively quick compared to doing the research. You can spend as much or as little time as you want on the research phase, and one of the key skills for the course is learning to say 'that's enough'."

If you are thinking about studying, you may be concerned about the time commitment. Helen explains how it works for her. "Most of the work I have been able to do at home. I attended ABDO College for a day in January, two

days in October, a day in March, it maybe came to nine days in total. It has fitted with my work commitments; my director has always been willing to give me time off for conferences and study.” Simon Pinnington adds, “I arranged days off to do the course – I’m lucky as a director I have autonomy over my time. Having done the course I would support staff to do it too.” He continues, “Realistically if you are working in a busy practice, there will be times when you struggle to do any study during the day. I found it very straightforward to fit in the course, but I ended up writing essays late at night as my days were full already.”

Helen has got a lot out of the course. She says, “I’ve loved having access to academic articles and journal papers. Within the course I’ve always focussed on contact lenses where I could as that’s my main professional interest. The first time I looked at advice with regard to swimming – the BCLA issued advice this year that tied in with what I’d come up with when researching my essay the year before which was great. I’ve recently been looking at the evidence behind manufacturer claims for new contact lenses. A lot of the time you take it as read, and analysing it has been a real eye opener. If there is something that you are wondering about, studying gives you access to the resources you need to find out more. ABDO College is near Canterbury, I live in Poole, but I have been able to do everything online.” Simon also combined his own interests with the course. He is a light aircraft pilot in his spare time and says, “For my final



Simon Pinnington

essay I looked into the evidence for short aviation-style checklists to be adopted in practice. There have already been adopted in medicine and there is good evidence base that checklists save lives.”

Helen says, “I think the course has refreshed my interest in the subject. Doing the same thing over and over again you can become stale, and looking at it from a different angle has inspired me. Undertaking the course has been really valuable. It has improved my computer skills, I can now do a PowerPoint presentation, for example. I can think more analytically, generally and have developed better study skills as well as dispensing skills.” Simon says, “I found the teaching skills part of the course particularly helpful. I learned about understanding people’s motivations and how to apply this knowledge when passing on skills in a

workplace environment.” Simon found his experience as a dispensing optician helped him make the most of the course: “A year or two in practice will give you a better appreciation of problems patients face which will then help you make the most of the course.”

The course has given Simon Pinnington a fresh outlook too. He says, “It has given me greater awareness of growing conditions such as AMD. Because of population demographics high street practices need to prepare for that, indeed for any age related conditions. The course really helped me develop my practical skills like low vision work. I initially studied it umpteen years ago so the ODS course was a vast refresh.” Helen concludes, “I would definitely recommend it. I really enjoyed doing it, even before considering the degree at the end.”

# A unique opportunity for dispensing opticians to acquire a BSc (Hons) qualification

Working in partnership, ABDO College and Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) are now accepting enrolments for the next BSc (Hons) in Optical Dispensing Studies cohort.

- An honours degree programme designed to enhance professional development
- Develops new skills that can be applied to the working environment
- Enhances the ability to problem-solve within the practice
- Profession specific knowledge to meet current GOC competency requirements
- Provides new career opportunities

## BSc (Hons) in Optical Dispensing Studies

The BSc (Hons) in Optical Dispensing Studies (ODS) course is a 'top-up' degree programme specifically designed for dispensing opticians who already hold an ABDO Level 6 Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing (FBDO). The two-year programme will commence with an initial Academic Development module that will prepare candidates before they embark on the course, which in turn will lead to a BSc (Hons) qualification upon successful completion of the programme. This is an exciting opportunity for DOs who seek an additional higher level qualification to enhance their professional development. As numbers are strictly limited early application is strongly advised.

### COURSE FEATURES

- A two-year programme
- Part-time learning
- Attendance days at ABDO College and CCCU
- 'CLIC Learn' virtual learning environment
- Consists of six 20 credit modules
- Study content includes profession specific modules on contact lenses and low vision as well university modules that are recommended for opticians
- The Academic Development module commences at CCCU on 25 and 26 February 2014
- The Course commences in October 2014

### ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

- ABDO Level 6 Diploma in Ophthalmic Dispensing and ABDO membership
- Application deadline 3 January 2014

For further information and application forms for this and other courses, or to request a copy of the 2013/14 ABDO College Prospectus, please contact the ABDO College Courses Team on **01227 733 911** or email [info@abdocollege.org.uk](mailto:info@abdocollege.org.uk)

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**KEEPING EXCELLENCE IN YOUR SIGHTS**