

Re:View

Keeping excellence in your sights | June 2015 | Issue 22



**Top tips for study
success as a mature
student**

**An interview
with Debbie Gigg**

**Profile feature
on Scott McCallum**

We find out about Scott and
his research into disposable
and re-usable contact lenses

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Another milestone for ABDO College



It was announced at Optrafair in April that ABDO College and the Worshipful Company of Spectacle

Makers (WCSM) have agreed in principle that, with effect from 1 September 2015, the College will take over the day-to-day running and administration of the WCSM training courses for optical technicians and optical retail staff leading to the WCSM's nationally accredited qualifications. This sees ABDO College achieve yet another milestone and it means we can ensure that there's a clear learning pathway available for those embarking on a career in optics – leading towards a range of qualifications from level 2 through

to registerable and higher qualifications. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Debbie Gigg to the ABDO College team, she has joined as course coordinator for optical support programmes, as a result of the changeover in administration to the College of the WCSM courses.

Also in this issue of Re:View there's a profile feature on Scott McCallum and you can read his research relating to patient compliance with daily disposable and re-useable soft contact lenses.

ABDO College is attracting a steady increase in mature students and the 'Top tips for study success as a mature student' article, as well as providing useful information, highlights some truly inspirational stories – where there's a will, there's a way!

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

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Top tips for study success as a mature student

Are you considering improving your skills by returning to study? Or perhaps you have just signed up for or started a course? Going back to college or university as a mature student can seem daunting, so we've asked people who have done it for what helped them. Read on to find out their top tips for success.

There is a real mix of students on most of the courses at ABDO College, with a range of ages and backgrounds. Some will have families and commitments at home, some will have studied recently and others not for a while. Jackie Davies is now a DO at Boots in Bury St Edmunds. She says, "I qualified when I was 40, with two children at primary school, and running a practice! Organisation is the key, plus bloody-minded determination!" Laura Dayes from Hull is nearing completion of the CLO course. She says, "I'm 32 and started the course a single parent with two children under 5. I would say make sure you don't drop behind on work as when you have other commitments if that happens there's little chance of getting back on track." Marij Waterfield of Fraserburgh says, "I'm 44 and I recently started the ABDO College degree course to be a dispensing optician via distance learning and block release. I'm not going to lie, it has been the biggest challenge I've ever done, working full time as practice manager in a very busy independent practice, studying full time and keeping house and family."

A gradual start can help you if you haven't studied for a while. Suzanne Flay 55, says, "I am in my first year of training to be a DO. I have worked up to this over

a period of four years firstly doing the ABDO College access maths course, then Specsavers internal courses Cert 3 and Cert 4. Doing all this stood me in good stead for degree level study as I was used to having to put time aside to study and my brain was used to having to think hard again after a long break! If you don't use it you lose it!"

Overwhelm is a normal feeling when starting anything new. Michelle Newton, 42, did the ophthalmic dispensing degree course and is now a dispensing optician and practice manager at Ashleigh Sight Care, Portsmouth. She says, "I found it very difficult to begin with to fit everything in and was very overwhelmed in the first year. Planning and organisation is the key and making sure you don't leave assignments and essays to the last minute."

Organisation is a theme that runs through many students suggestions. Abby Peters is 30. She studied for her BSc(Hons) FBDO then went straight on to study the BSc optometry course at Aston University. Abby is currently in her final year, and she says, "Organisation, forward planning and having a good network of fellow student friends to help each other through the tough times is essential!" Andy Dunn is a CLO at Specsavers in Milton Keynes. He says, "I finished the DO course in '98 aged 21, and started the Contact Lens Certificate course in 2011 considerably older. My tip would be to be rigid in setting time aside for studying and completion of assignments. What's more, whatever time you remember it taking to complete a task, it will take longer when you restart studying."

Breaking up your work into small sections can help. Elizabeth Bartlam recommends, "an exceptionally rigid and well planned timetable, as a mature student usually has numerous other essential commitments. I aim to do a little but very, very, very often. I find helps juggle items so they all get done (eventually)."

Elizabeth is a dispensing instructor in optometry at Aston University, Birmingham and is studying for her ophthalmic doctorate. DO Peter Williamson BSc(Hons) FBDO, 32, is currently studying the Low Vision



This article was written by Antonia Chitty who is most of the way through a MA course, has three children, and also works!

Honours course. He is another advocate of timetabling: "My top tips would be to have a comprehensive timetable to fit your studying around everything else in your life, try and get ahead in your work so each week isn't a panic, and enjoy it!" Terri Broe explains how she fitted work in with her family: "I started my DO course at age 42, and qualified six years ago. My kids were 12 and 15 when I was studying. I studied late evenings when they were in bed. Sometimes I was up until 2.00am and later on occasion. Being a natural night owl helped but I was always tired. However you just do it because you have to." Terri now works as a DO in Dursley, Gloucestershire, in an independent practice.

Support is helpful when studying, both at home and with your studies. Think about whether you might need more childcare: could a family member collect the children from school one evening or take them out on the weekend. On a positive note, Andy Dunn says that he has found that, "it's a lot easier to utilise a support network of not only your tutor, but other students as well via social media now. Oh and enjoy it of course."

Thinking about the topics that you cover, you can also find specialist support from tutors and professional colleagues. There are things that you can do as you learn to make it easier to revise and recall your work. At 41 Michelle Hamilton

BSc(Hons) FBDO is a newly qualified DO. She says, "No matter what your age or circumstances, I am single mum of two teenagers, the key to getting through it is being organised. Have separate folders for different subjects, whilst they may take up loads of room this will make revision easier. Take concise notes as best you can too and learn to condense them to get key points." CLO Keith Dickinson says, "I was 26 when I started a full time course at Bradford College back in the 80s. Keeping things properly filed is essential to staying on top of things." Keith has found the value of repetition both for facts and diagrams. He says, "I found it useful to continually rewrite my notes trying to keep just the essential information in them. I also practised drawing and labelling sections through retina, lid and eye this worked well for the exams as I was able to save time as I could almost do the drawing on autopilot."

Formulae can be hard to remember, and there are lots of them! Sandi Charlesworth says, "To remember the various formulae I made up my own sentences which meant something to me. Most are not repeatable as there are a lot of Fs in optical formulae!" Sandi is now business development manager for the National Eyecare Group. Marj Waterfield says, "I've had to retrain my brain to soak up info. I write everything down however small it may be, I find I can't retain it by reading alone. I also have had to think up ways of retaining formula, I do it to songs, changing choruses to include formulas." Terri Broe says, "Just be organised and methodical. Read and read and read. Don't look

ahead to next assignments either or you'll scare yourself silly. Concentrate on each bit at a time. Also stick post it notes with formulae on EVERYWHERE, see them all the time and they sink in."

Sarah Freeman says, "I started the DO course at 20, qualified at 23, started optometry at 27 and am now in my second year. My tip is don't leave studying until the last minute!" Ian Berry 31, is a pre-reg optometrist. He found keeping ahead was essential when faced by a family crisis. He says, "I went to uni after working as a qualified DO for a few years. I got married, and while we were expecting we lost one twin and the other twin was born at 23 weeks and spent four months in hospital, I also relocated 300 miles, all in my final year of uni before starting my pre-reg. My top tip that worked for me is to put in the hard work early so you can still cope when life gets in the way. It all went by in a blur but I got a 1st class Hons with 5 awards and spent most of my time revising (or not) at a hospital bedside."

It can be crucial to be able to switch between the different parts of your life. Try to find a quiet place to study, so you can prioritise this without interruption. Sandi Charlesworth says, "I started studying in my early 40s via distance learning while working full time after moving from IT to optics. I did a diploma course first to make sure I



ABDO College at Optrafair 2015

could find time and that my brain wasn't too rusty. I then went on to qualify as a DO and graduated, in between my two kids graduated with their degrees! My tip is that in order to study, you need the ability to switch off from everything else going on around you."

At the same time, you also need to be able to switch off from your studies. Dan Varcoe is a DO and now a qualified optometrist too, working in Cornwall. He says, "I went back to study optometry in my mid 20's. As everyone has said organisation, hard work, and utilisation of others around you helps. My other tip is don't forget to relax, take breaks and have fun when you can." If you feel that life is a slog, Andy Dunn says, "Keep going through those times when you have doubts about whether you can do it." Laura Dayes adds, "Just focus on the end result and know that the stress isn't forever."

From reading these tips you can see that many mature students go on to love studying: people who have contributed to this article are studying for low vision and contact lens qualifications, optometry degrees and doctorates. Don't panic if you can't imagine how you could follow them: most students find some parts of the course a struggle but go on and succeed anyway. And if life throws you a curveball, there are still plenty of options. Shelley Kimber-Smith, 36, says, "I am starting the second year of the DO course now. I did the first year 16 years ago but was heavily pregnant, doing a managerial NVQ, working full time and buying a new house. It was all a bit too much but I'm trying again now!"



The ABDO College stand received a steady flow of visitors throughout the three days of Optrafair 2015 at the NEC, Birmingham.

As well as announcing that it will take over the day-to-day running and administration of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers' training courses for optical technicians and optical retail staff, the College also promoted its comprehensive range of courses and took the opportunity to launch the new 2015 edition of *Ophthalmic Lenses Availability*.

Scott McCallum

We find out about Scott and his research

In this issue of *Re:View* you can read about Scott McCallum's research paper, Do daily disposable contact lenses improve patient compliance compared with re-useable soft contact lenses? Scott completed his BSc in Ophthalmic Dispensing 2014. Read on to find out more about Scott, his studies, his research and his hopes for the future of his career in optics.

After completing an undergraduate degree in Applied Bioscience, Scott McCallum was seeking a job. He says, "I was speaking to a friend who worked at Specsavers in Irvine, mainly because I was interested in getting new contact lenses. During the conversation I mentioned that I was looking for work, and he told me about a customer services position. Thinking of the position more as a stop gap than a career move, I applied for the job. I was successful, and found working in optics to be far more interesting than I'd imagined." Scott continues, "I was in the job for about a year before I asked about being sponsored through DO training. I'd already worked part time in retail while I was doing my first degree and it was becoming increasingly apparent to me that optics would be a good fusion between this retail experience and the science that I had studied. The more training I had in store, the more my interest was triggered."

Scott joined the course at ABDO College in September 2011. He says, "Returning to study was a little bit daunting at first. I had only been out of studying a year so could transfer my study skills – but I also had work

full time! Time management was the hardest part. I had to work out how to make time for practical and case study work in a busy practice, as well as fit in study and write essays in my own time. It was a great help to have the online study groups. These meant those of us on the course could help each other, and I found that the professional in practice helped me too." A high point of the course, according to Scott, is the way it brought him into contact with a range of people. He says, "My course included people from different types of stores, independent, multiples, people with all sorts of different backgrounds. I felt that really broadened the education I was getting alongside the modules I studied. I'm grateful to have made so many friends over the years." When explaining how he focussed his interests in order to come up with his dissertation project topic, Scott says, "My interest was stimulated by a prior project. I had to create an academic poster on hand hygiene compliance, risk factors and contamination factors due to negligence with contact lens storage. As part of this I had to think about how professionals improve compliance, and it made me consider whether

moving to daily disposables might help this. There are so many types of lens materials and wear schedules – daily, weekly, fortnightly, monthly and extended wear – on the market. I started to wonder if some were more susceptible to bacterial contamination than others." Scott found that his first degree helped him for the dissertation. He says, "Because of my previous course, I'd done a lot of microbiology, so a lot of the research felt familiar. I had completed cross contamination labs and hand hygiene protocols to NHS standards and actually did work identifying bacteria through culture and gram stain, every step of the research all made sense."

Summing up his paper, Scott says, "My headline finding is that the compliance rate with daily lenses is a



Scott receiving his Foundation Degree from Jo Underwood (Principal, ABDO College)

lot better, but possibly because cleaning is eliminated. The worst culprits for non-compliance tend to be fortnightly lenses. Even with daily lenses, there are still some behaviours that indicate poor compliance. The onus is always on the practitioner to educate the patient to eliminate non-compliant behaviours.” Scott has been able to put his research into practice. He says, “I find in practice, if patients are asking what’s the best lens to go for – daily, monthly, fortnightly – I can now explain the reasons better. And I always try to explain to them that as long as they comply with hygiene instructions the risks of lens wear should be low.”

Completing the dissertation showed Scott how much he enjoyed the research part of the degree. Scott remains a registrant with the Society of Biology in order to keep relevant with biological topics, and hopes to progress his education in optics. He says, “I am definitely interested in furthering my academic career, but first I want to take a break from study to gain more hands on and practical experience in store and in business. After that, I would be interested in opportunities to support the next generation of students at ABDO College as well as exploring MSc courses such as primary care ophthalmology. I would like to see DO’s scope of practice expanded in a similar manner to how Nurse Practitioners support GPs in primary care, in light of their skill sets and advanced training available. I think exciting opportunities will arise due to the BSc (Hons) programme.”

Do daily disposable contact lenses improve patient compliance compared with re-useable soft contact lenses?

By Scott McCallum BSc(Hons) FBDO BSc AMSB

INTRODUCTION

Numerous studies indicate contact lens compliance amongst patients is a considerable concern to practitioners due to the prevalence of sight threatening conditions arising from infection (Efron, N. *et al*; 2010). It is also concerning patients are not always ready to admit (or realise) that poor compliance is increasing their risks of affecting ocular health. Patients commonly assume that daily disposable contact lenses

provide less risk as they do not need to be disinfected and stored for re-use. If such an assumption were to be true, the question must be asked: “Do daily disposable contact lenses improve patient compliance compared with re-usable soft contact lenses?” The behaviours that lead to non-compliance with daily disposable contact lenses and re-usable soft lenses will be reviewed from current research.

METHODS

The literature search was conducted using online search tools to obtain academic, published resources. A keyword search was critical in obtaining the relevant articles and online journals for review. Google Scholar, Science Direct, and PubMed etc would produce thousands of results of various sub-topics. Using keywords such as “contact lens compliance” and “daily disposable non-compliance” would produce targeted results and narrowed the literature available for critique. Such search techniques were essential to obtain primary and secondary literature sources (Timmins, F.; McCabe, C.; 2005).

The critical framework from Polit *et al* (2001) was favoured for this research as it presented clear guidelines to follow for both quantitative and qualitative research. Five key articles were critiqued providing insight to the research question.

“Daily disposable lenses: The better alternative” (Article 1) generally deals with qualitative research. There are times where sample sizes are not provided and it cannot be determined if populations will be large enough to eliminate bias. Both authors have

declared a “Conflict of interest” section at the end of the article to declare funding was received from two of the largest manufacturers of contact lenses in the world: Bausch & Lomb and Johnson & Johnson (Cho, P.; Boost, M.V.; 2013).

“The use of daily disposable lenses in problematic reusable contact lens wearers” (Article 2) comprises of a balance between quantitative and qualitative research. This article contains primary research conducted by the author (Holmes, S.; 1996). The researchers have tested their results against the null hypothesis and alternative hypothesis using statistical p Values to support their data against 95% confidence intervals (Goodman, S.N.; 1999).

“An international analysis of contact lens compliance” (Article 3) contains both quantitative and qualitative research.

The primary research for the article was conducted by the authors via online survey. The statistics collated are visually appealing and allow simple conclusions to be drawn (Morgan, P.B. *et al*; 2011). Results are tested against a 95% confidence interval with p Values provided. The authors present their

METHODS *continued*

concerns about limitations with their results due to the fact their data consists of an online survey, where contact lens users who think they are less compliant than others may actually be more compliant than the average individual. This article also suggests compliance levels differ from country to country. A large sample population reduced bias within results.

"Improving patient education and attitudes toward compliance with instructions for contact lens use" (Article 4) is a recent article published in 2011 that consists of qualitative data. McMonnies (2011) conveys the importance of patient education.

"Compliance with soft contact lens

replacement schedules and associated contact lens related ocular complications: The UCLA Contact Lens Study" (Article 5) is a primary research article containing sample data from a large population suggesting reliability and validity within data. Researches quantitative and qualitative data. Studies were undertaken by the authors of the article. The researchers compare their own results to studies conducted by other researchers to test validity and draw direct comparisons (Yeung, K.K. *et al*; 2010). All data collated is tested against a 95% confidence interval with p Values provided for analysis. Results were collated into tables and "box and whisker" plots for ease of analysis and comparison.

Most interestingly, when compared with fortnightly, monthly, quarterly and yearly re-usable soft lenses, daily disposable lens wearers were amongst the most compliant patients. Men had more complications than women.

Literature searches were conducted to obtain information on sight threatening complications that arise through poor compliance, for example: microbial keratitis, fungal keratitis, acanthamoeba keratitis (Ibrahim, Y.W. *et al*; 2009). Literature was also reviewed that would suggest why patients become non-compliant, such as financial restrictions and affordability causing over wear (Efron, S.E. *et al*; 2012).

FINDINGS

Article 1 suggests that daily disposable contact lenses are a better alternative to re-usable soft contact lenses as they improve compliance through eliminating the need to disinfect and store lenses for re-use. There is less possibility of allergy to disinfectant solutions and preservatives. Cho & Boost (2013) both argue that re-usable contact lenses build up lens deposits and non-compliance will lead to poorer comfort, poorer vision due to lens deposits building up on lenses and complications to ocular health with a higher risk of microbial infection. What is made clear in Article 1 are that daily disposable lenses will still carry the same risks and complications as re-usable soft lenses and non-compliance in the form of over wear in daily disposables will lead to increased risk of microbial contamination. Acanthamoeba keratitis and microbial keratitis are complications that can arise from poor hand hygiene and over wear and the authors refer to literature that states microbial keratitis is at increased risk with daily disposable contact lens wearers yet there is other research that states the risks are less. Cho & Boost (2013) also credit complacent practitioners for complications and poor compliance, not taking the time to ensure patients do not learn bad habits and avoid taking their care regime seriously.

Article 2 provides statistical proof that

re-usable soft contact lens wearers who are non-compliant will find improvements moving to daily disposable lenses as compliance behaviours are less intensive. Hickson-Curran *et al* (2014) found that improvements in compliance were found as compliance became "easier" for patients. The research also found that patients encountered less complication with daily lenses with regards to ocular health ie dry eye, giant papillary conjunctivitis.

Article 3 suggests re-usable contact lens wearers are less compliant than daily disposable users. It was identified by Morgan *et al* (2011) that young males were least compliant from a large sample population. It has been suggested that practitioners spend more time with patients and examine their hand hygiene, contact lens handling, cleaning regime and how they would clean their lens casings with regards to re-usable soft lenses. This article became of primary importance to the final conclusions drawn, it suggests complete compliance with contact lenses no matter the modality is very rare, and that compliant behaviours improve due to the fact there are less non-compliant behaviours possible due to the lack of a cleaning regime. The interesting statistics drawn were that daily disposable lenses were an increased risk for microbial keratitis (Dumbleton, K.A. *et al*; 2011).

Article 4 focuses on psychological factors that could be utilised from other health professions to improve patient compliance, rather than explore the modality of the contact lens wear. McMonnies (2011) indicates a need for stricter practitioner attitudes, and to motivate to improve compliance through social understanding and behavioural modifications and to avoid confrontation so to not antagonise a patient or reduce confidence. It is also identified that stubborn patients may never become compliant and run the risk of serious corneal infection.

Article 5 takes an approach on the modality of lens wear and the health complications that arise through non-compliance. Yeung *et al* (2010) suggest over wear is the most common non-compliance issue and believe that compliance is a patient related decision. Controls were set to observe patients to find if they were compliant or not based on criteria. Patients who followed their lens regime and specified wearing schedules were deemed compliant. Patients were non-compliant if they over wore lenses. It was found that the most non-compliant patients wore fortnightly re-usable soft lenses and that daily disposable contact lens wearers were amongst the most compliant.

DISCUSSION

What has become obvious through the analysis of the literature is that full compliance rarely exists. Although daily disposable lenses eliminate the need for cleaning and disinfecting soft lenses, there will be patients that will continue to pursue non-compliant habits. Hand hygiene is still of extreme



importance in order to eliminate any risk of infection such as gram negative or gram positive bacteria invading the contact lens material (Dumbleton, K.A. *et al*; 2013). Affordability may cause a patient to over wear their daily disposable lenses (Efron, S.E. *et al*; 2012). Patients may buy saline solution to continually store lenses to wear the following day (Efron, S.E. *et al*; 2012). Patients may swim or shower with contact lenses inserted and risk acanthamoeba infection, which is commonly confused for viral keratitis or herpes simplex keratitis by practitioners (Hamrroush, A.; Welch, J.; 2014). Delay in specific treatment would ultimately lead to a poor prognosis if anti-amoebal treatment is not started. Other ocular concern will arise through these poor behaviours such as dry eye, CLARE (contact lens acute red eye), giant papillary conjunctivitis (GPC) etc. (Efron, N.; Morgan, P.; 2008) It is crucial the practitioner ensures the patient is aware of the dangers of non-compliance, but in a method that does not intimidate or scaremonger the patient. Research is continuously conducted and considered in this avenue to find resolutions, and continue education in patient centred care to understand behaviours and develop techniques that could ultimately lead to drastic improvements in the compliance of contact lenses (Efron, N.; Morgan, P.; 2008).

CONCLUSION

Daily disposable contact lenses have been proven to show improvements in compliance, but do daily disposable contact lenses alone improve compliance? Daily disposable contact lenses make compliance "easier" to manage and eliminate certain behaviours and therefore certain risk factors are eliminated ie no lens cleaning/storage required. Non-compliance is still exhibited by patients with daily disposable contact lenses, and face the same risk factors as patients prescribed with re-usable soft contact lenses (Niyadurupola, N.; Illingworth, C.D.; 2006). Therefore the practitioner must ensure the patient understands the seriousness of poor compliance.

Such research skills are relevant to my practice to ensure dispensing opticians and optometrists work together and speak the same academic language to improve public eye care. Research into current issues can be individualised and passed on to other members of the team to ensure efficiency within the workplace.

As various levels of dispensing optician will now be registered (Foundation Degree, Fellowship Diploma, BSc, BSc (Hons) etc.), it is important that the profession continues in this direction to gain advancement and recognition and continue to be recognised with the same importance we view optometrists and fellow ophthalmic practitioners.

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An interview with Debbie Gigg

Debbie Gigg Chartered MCIPD BSc(Hons) FBDO has recently joined the team at ABDO College as Course Coordinator – Optical Support Programmes, reflecting the shift in administration to the College of the day-to-day running and administration of the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (WCSM) training courses for optical technicians and optical retail staff leading to the WCSM's nationally accredited qualifications. Debbie has worked in optics since the start of her career, and has specialised in learning and development. Read on to find out more about her background and her vision for the future of optical training.



Like many people, Debbie stumbled into working in optics at first. She says, "My first job after A-levels was temping on the phones at Silhouette when my father ran the contact lens department. I'd just got my results and had no idea what I wanted to do." As Debbie's interest in optics grew she applied for a job at Leightons Opticians. She says, "I then became a trainee dispensing optician at their practice in Reading." Optics runs in the family so perhaps it is no surprise that Debbie followed this career. She says, "Both my parents worked for Hydron. My sister didn't go into optics straight away, but has now also trained as a DO and is a manager of a very successful independent practice in West London" Debbie did her training at City and Islington College, with a combination of day release and correspondence study. She says, "I didn't find distance learning easy at first, which I think helps me to relate to students in my current role. I loved the anatomy and visual optics, but I struggled with optics as

I couldn't relate to how the optics of a focimeter or telescope worked. I find the applied subjects much easier to learn as they relate to the role, so for me are more interesting. I understand how hard it can feel when you have to combine study with a busy practice role. At that age I struggled to progress my career and study at the same time. I worked in Kent in my second and third year, the practice was open twelve hours a day. I had to juggle succeeding in education with doing overtime and playing my role in the practice. I also struggled to sit down by myself and study: remote working was difficult. Face to face at college was easier, I could talk to the staff and other students and confirm that I understood what I was learning by talking things through. This suits my learning style much better." Debbie learnt a lot from her studies, more than just the technical aspects of dispensing. She says, "I knuckled down, developed self-discipline and got on with it. Later I did a Learning and Development HR post graduate

qualification. It required twenty hours a week home study and by then I'd learnt the skills I needed to study independently."

Debbie has worked in a range of roles in optics, including as working in a practice in Surrey, as a rep at L'Amy for a while, for Boots, and for an independent practice before returning to Leightons to manage practices in Cobham and Camberley in Surrey. Debbie says, "At that time the group acquired Linwood Strong branches in Epsom and Sutton. As well as managing practices I was doing a lot more training and recruitment. I said to the MD at the time that I couldn't both train well and manage the practice successfully, and as a result I moved to head office as training manager."

At Leightons Debbie became responsible for all the trainee DOs and the learning and development for the organisation. She says, "Having been through the course myself, I was adamant about the time and investment that supervisors and practice managers

needed to make. Having a trainee is a full time commitment and they need proper support. It is important to do things like look at the clinic list and explore whether there are interesting patients coming up and discuss them. As an example, if there was a child with a -8.00D prescription coming in later in the day, what issues might we need to talk to the parents about? Leightons' ethos was very much about supporting the trainee DOs."

Debbie was training manager at Leightons for ten years before moving on. She says, "I had my daughter, saw a part time role at the WCSM which combined optics with learning and development, my two interests. The WCSM is a forward thinking organisation and wanted someone to deal with learners and employers, offering bespoke training courses and that was five years ago." Debbie is also an ABDO theory and practical examiner and has taught in Malaysia supporting the DO students there.

Debbie is now transitioning to working with ABDO College. She says, "My current job is new, and we are exploring how everything will come together. With the support of the ABDO College team we aim to create a proper career progression pathway for all learners in optics. We will streamline the current provision. Currently the WCSM offer a number of qualifications with similar units. We have stripped that out to create simply a level 2 and a level 3 optical support qualification, with mandatory units in roles and responsibilities in optics, the eye and

ametropia and communication in optics. We will then recommend further modules for certain roles covering topics such as contact lenses, screening, dispensing, refractive surgery, repairs and glazing, to build up their qualification. Each unit is a standalone award. Participants gain confidence and get a sense of achievement with each success. Going straight in to do the DO course is a massive commitment, but building up gradually gives learners the confidence that they can do it." There are further improvements on the way too. Debbie explains, "We are mapping courses to take into account qualifications gained so, for example, the maths unit passed at level 3 exempts you from maths in level 4." There will soon be a level 4 qualification for optical retail staff available also, which fully caters for all rungs on the career ladder.

Debbie is eagerly anticipating her new, expanded role. She says, "I'm

looking forward to reaching out to ABDO members and other professionals across the optical sector, and encouraging new and existing learners. We tell each new student about how their course can open up potential career and study options for them. Many of the employers I work with have put people through qualifications already and know the drill: I hope they will approve of the new streamlined courses. We will be reaching out to everyone to explain how good learning and development can motivate staff and improve your practice." This new link up comes with challenges for Debbie. She says, "It's a little bit scary, we could have a phenomenal number of learners on board very soon. Now that the WCSM have the support of ABDO College it will be much easier to really make sure these courses have the right impact and continue to raise standards within the optical profession."

2015/16 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



A close-up photograph of a young man with dark skin and short dark hair, smiling broadly. A hand is resting on his forehead, and another hand is near his eye, possibly demonstrating a contact lens. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

Let us further your career

ABDO College provides comprehensive education for dispensing opticians and is currently accepting applications for a range of different courses. Some of the reasons why you should make ABDO College your first choice to either start or further your career in optics are:

- An extensive range of courses to suit your individual needs
- Dedicated and experienced academic staff
- Friendly and supportive learning environment
- Consistently high theory and practical examination results
- Helpful course tutors
- Vibrant and positive attitude towards students
- Committed to the furtherance of dispensing optics
- Established by the profession for the profession
- A proven track record of success

CONTACT LENS CERTIFICATE

The Contact Lens Certificate course provides an ideal opportunity for opticians to further their career by specialising in contact lenses. The course leads to the ABDO Level 6 Certificate in Contact Lens Practice qualification, enabling registration on the General Optical Council specialty register for contact lens dispensing.

Course features

- A one year course commencing in September 2015
- Two separate weeks block release at Godmersham
- Block release accommodation can be provided

Entry requirements

- ABDO Fellowship Diploma and GOC registration or for existing students a successful pass in the final theory examinations
- Qualified, registered optometrists and ophthalmologists are also eligible to enrol

Application deadline: **August 2015**

For further information and application forms for these and other courses, or to request a copy of the ABDO College Prospectus, please contact the ABDO College Courses Team on

01227 738 829 (Option 1)

or email info@abdocollege.org.uk

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