



European Academy
of Optometry and Optics

PRESS RELEASE

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ACADEMY MEETS IN PRAGUE

Over 220 delegates from over 20 countries met at the European Academy's third conference in Prague from 6 - 8 May 2011. The event incorporated the European Optometric Education Congress formerly held in Brno and focused around the themes of education, research and clinical practice.

Professor Roger Crelier (Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz) took over from Dr Feike Grit (Netherlands) as President of the European Academy at the Annual Academy Dinner on Saturday 7 May. Dr Paul Murphy (Cardiff University, UK) was elected unopposed as President-elect. Both will serve a term of two years. Commenting on his appointment Professor Crelier said:

“As President my role is to be the public face of the European Academy and I am looking forward to continuing to ensure that matters directly affecting the membership remain priority on the Academy's agenda. It is inspiring to see so many delegates here from so many different backgrounds, and particularly so many students, the future of our profession. We are here with a common goal - to further advance eye care across Europe. This weekend's conference has provided us with valuable learning and networking opportunities and I hope delegates will leave the event enthused and motivated by the Academy's work.”

At Academy elections held at the event, Academy members voted for Professor Holger Hanswolf Dietze (Beuth Hochschule für Technik Berlin, Germany) who was appointed a Trustee of the Academy in category three - individual educationalist. To fill the vacancy created by Dr Murphy's election to President-elect, the Board unanimously agreed to co-opt Dr Ellen Svarverud (Buskerud University College, Norway). Ellen will fill the role for a year, as Trustee in category one – representative of a European Education Institution that is itself a member of the Academy. The role will be re-elected in 2012.

The increased scope of the meeting reflected a huge increase in the number of abstracts received for the event. Keynote lectures from Professor John Lawrenson (City University, UK) on *Education and Clinical competence* and Dr Thomas van den Berg (University of Amsterdam and Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience, The Netherlands) on *Ocular Straylight* were a highlight of the conference. Delegates also benefited from a range of other lectures, practical workshops and poster presentations, where they had the chance to engage directly with researchers.

Members roundtable sessions focused on how to write a research paper, the role of the optometrist in the USA and how to run an eye clinic. For the first time the Academy's event also included education and clinical practice case study sessions, designed to continue the

principles of the European Educators Congress to share information, learn from each other and explore and share best practice. Case studies focusing on a broad variety of topics from contact lens options for patients with acne rosacea to the diagnosis and management of multiple visual findings in a teenage male suffering from traumatic brain injury were particularly well received.

The Academy also awarded prizes for the best poster and oral presentation. The UK's College of Optometrists sponsored these prizes. The prize for best poster presentation was judged by the Academy's Abstract and Programme Panel and was awarded to Dr Ali Masmali for his poster *Tear ferning test :A new grading scale*. Professor Peter Moest was presented with the prize for best oral presentation for his lecture *The dominant eye*, as judged by the delegates.

Following the pilot of the Academy's new Fellowship programme the first fellowships were awarded at the event. Presenting the awards, outgoing President, Dr Feike Grit, told members that the award of Fellowship was an important step for the Academy as an organisation. "Our fellowship programme was designed to create an attractive, flexible route to achieving fellowship, an important award which can help to advance the profession."

Over the last year the Academy has worked with a small group of volunteers to help finalise the Programme by trying it out. Fellowships were awarded to:

- **David Berkow** – in recognition of his work as an individual practitioner, to raise the profile and profession of optometry in a country that is still working towards the establishment of a recognised and established profession.
- **Bryony Pawinska** – in recognition of the important role Bryony has played in the development of both the European Academy and the optometric profession.
- **Dr Heiko Pult** – in recognition of his extensive work combining research, science, teaching and clinical practice, raising the standards of clinical care for patients.
- **Helmer Schweizer** – for excellence and innovation in the fields of optometric research, education and the management of visual healthcare
- **Karen Sparrow** - in recognition of Karen's major contribution to Vision Aid Overseas at administrative, clinical leadership and strategic levels for her work to enhance the delivery and quality of optometric care in the UK and overseas.
- **Dr Cornelis Anton Verezen** – in recognition of a life-long commitment to expanding the role of the optometrist in the important area of low vision.
- **Dr Jeffery Weaver** – for demonstrating a wide scope of influence in the field of optometry, both nationally and internationally.

Life Fellowship was also awarded to Dr Feike Grit, in recognition of his vision of the development of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics.

The Fellowship programme will be formally launched following the conference.

Dates for the Academy's next annual conference will be announced later this year.

For further information or to request photography from this meeting please contact Ellen Colquhoun, Head of Marketing and Communications at the College of Optometrists on + 44 (0) 20 7766 4342 or email Ellen.colquhoun@college-optometrists.org

Notes for Editors:

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