



European Academy
of Optometry and Optics

European Academy Annual Meeting 2011 – Prague

The 3rd annual meeting of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics took place from the 6 to the 8 of May in Prague. The meeting saw over 200 delegates from 20 countries worldwide attend to share in the process of creating a unique event. With speakers and presenters at the meeting coming from 17 countries, including Iran, Canada, Saudi Arabia and the USA, as well as a core of European nations, the European Academy's meeting had a truly international feel, while retaining its uniquely European ambience. With a large group of students from the University of Berlin joining the proceedings, the delegate group encompassed the entire scope of the professions of optics and optometry – from training, through clinical practice and research to the educators and leaders in the profession.

Commenting on the event, Professor Crelier, President of the Academy said: *“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.”*

The programme content was organised in three primary strands – clinical, educational and research. Within these strands there were opportunities for delegates to engage with a wide range of topics in a variety of learning modes – lectures, short presentation sessions, round-table workshop discussions, poster presentations and clinical workshops. With the addition of national and clinical case study sessions this year's programme was more diverse than ever.

The clinical content of the Conference began with the workshop sessions, held on Friday afternoon and Saturday morning at the Vision Care Institute of Johnson and Johnson sro in the centre of Prague. With outstanding technical facilities, TVCI provided an exemplary learning environment for delegates. This year's workshop topics included punctal plugs and lachrymal syringing, bespoke contact lenses and the ever popular ocular coherence tomography. With opportunities to engage in practical, clinical skills development and interactive clinical education sessions in small groups with leading experts, these workshops offered a great opportunity for delegates to refresh and extend their clinical skills.

The Conference's two keynote presentations also provided plenty of clinical food for thought. In the first keynote Professor John Lawrenson, from City University in the UK, gave a presentation on 'Educating toward clinical competence'. Although of special relevance to educators, his lecture provided interesting and at times challenging insights into how clinical competence is acquired, developed and maintained. Although focused on educational settings and training to becoming a member of a profession, there was clear scope for extrapolating into the questions around Continued Professional Development (CPD) and the challenge of maintaining and improving clinical skills across a career. If the professions of optics and optometry are to thrive in the ever more challenging health care environments across Europe then the question of how to develop shared definitions of clinical competence, and how to ensure best practice in maintaining such skills is available to all irrespective of national boundaries and differences, will be critical.

The second keynote address was from Dr Thomas van den Berg, from the University of Amsterdam and the Netherlands Institute for Neuroscience, speaking on the subject of 'Ocular stray light'. Dr van den Berg's presentation was lively and engaging, demonstrating that stray light is an issue that is relevant to a range of conditions and settings beyond the more common applications relating to cataract. With the likely growth in numbers of older people and demands to extend the active and productive age range of workforces, the capacity to understand the causes and effects of stray light seems likely to become increasingly important to the practice of optometry and optics. Delegates left Dr van den Berg's lecture with much to discuss and consider.

The national and clinical case study sessions, added to the programme for the first time this year, provided another important way for delegates to discuss their own clinical experiences and to share their own practice. Each session brought together specific cases that had been presented in practice or ways in which nations had dealt with emerging educational or clinical issues, and used them as a basis for discussion. Topics included case studies as diverse as silicon hydro gel lens induced giant papillary conjunctivitis, the effects of brain trauma on visual ability, methods for reducing false positive referrals, the development of optometric prescribing and the effects of ocular parasites.

One of the characteristics of the academy meeting is the co-location with the European Council of Optometry and Optics (ECOO) meeting. This means that the clinicians, educators and researchers are joined by the representatives from the leading national organisations for optometry and optics in Europe, ensuring a rich and diverse mix of

delegates that fuels enjoyable and challenging conversations both in the sessions and in the networking spaces in between. The Academy set out to develop an environment that not only invites delegates to contribute to the programmed content, but also specifically aims to facilitate the networking and exchange of ideas that make such gatherings so important to the profession and so valuable to those who make the time to attend. In this way, the real issues affecting clinicians are incorporated into the event and help to shape the programme for future years.

Other highlights of the programme included the Academy awards for the most outstanding Oral and Poster Presentations. Sponsored by the College of Optometrists, UK, the Academy Awards recognise presentations that bring something extra to the meeting or that demonstrate particular enterprise, determination or excellence in the work to which they relate. The Oral Presentation Award, voted for by the delegates, was awarded to Professor Peter Moest (Germany) for his presentation on 'The Dominant Eye', which produced much interest and discussion, The Poster Presentation Award (judged by the Academy's Abstract and Programme Panel) was awarded to Dr Ali Masmali (Saudi Arabia) for his poster on a new grading scale for the tear ferning test.

Other presentations covered topics including Heidelberg edge perimetry in glaucoma patients, study of the visual function in young adults with learning difficulties and a time-lapse video demonstrating the development of the fundus during treatment for Wet ARMD.

Beyond the clear engagement of the delegates with the programme content and the opportunities to network and share ideas, the Academy Meeting once again demonstrated its commitment to responding to delegates' interests and to offering an event that is created as much by those who attend as by the Academy's Committees and staff.