



European Academy
of Optometry and Optics

PRESS RELEASE

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ACADEMY PRESENTS FIRST FELLOWSHIPS TO DUTCH OPTOMETRISTS

The European Academy of Optometry and Optics awarded its first ever Fellowships at its recent conference in Prague (6-8 May 2011). Dr Cornelis Anton Verezen, President of the Dutch Optometric Association, and Dr Feike Grit, Immediate Past President of the European Academy were two of the first individuals to be awarded Fellowship.

Following a year-long pilot scheme where volunteers had worked with the Academy to help finalise the Fellowship programme by trialling it, seven individuals were awarded Fellowship. Fellowship was presented to Dr Verezen in recognition of his life-long commitment to expanding the role of the optometrist in the important area of low vision.

Life Fellowship was awarded to Dr Feike Grit by the Academy's incoming President, Professor Roger Crelier, in recognition of his vision for the development of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics.

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. The Academy's Fellowship programme recognises and awards individual members of the Academy who have made a significant contribution to optometry and optics at a local, national and/or international level. Being accepted as a Fellow of the Academy entitles you to use the letters FEAOO after your name.”

Dr Grit went on to stress that Fellowship is a mark of achievement to which all members of the Academy can aspire. The award of Fellowship is held in high esteem but it is achievable through success in a variety of optometry or optic-related work and is accessible to many people. Fellowship was awarded to members who have made a significant contribution to the practice of optometry or optics, showing excellence and/or innovation in one or more of the following categories: clinical practice; the provision of visual or wider healthcare; optometric or optical research; optometric or optical education; the management of visual healthcare and higher qualifications in vision science. The European Academy's first Fellowships were also awarded to:

- **David Berkow** (Israel) – 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** (UK) – in recognition of the important role she has played in the development of the optometric profession nationally in the UK and also internationally

through her work with the World Council of Optometry and Optics and in the establishment and development of the European Academy.

- **Dr Heiko Pult** (Germany) – in recognition of his extensive work combining research, science, teaching and clinical practice, raising the standards of clinical care for patients.
- **Helmer Schweizer** (Switzerland) – for excellence and innovation in the fields of optometric research, education and the management of visual healthcare
- **Karen Sparrow** (UK) - 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 Jeffrey Weaver** (USA) – for demonstrating a wide scope of influence in the field of optometry, both nationally and internationally.

Commenting on the award Dr Anton Verezen, said:

“I am very happy and extremely proud to be one of the Academy's first Fellows. Participating in the Fellowship programme was a rewarding experience and I'm delighted that I was able to contribute to the Academy's development of the programme for future generations. To be awarded the Fellowship in front of peers from around the world at the Academy's recent conference, was an honour.”

The Fellowship programme will be formally launched following the conference.

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.

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

-Ends-

Notes to editors:

1. 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
2. The secretariat for the European Academy is provided by the College of Optometrists, London, United Kingdom. For more information about the European Academy please go to www.eaoo.info or contact:

Jane Kielb, Academy Manager

E-mail: info@eaoo.info

Telephone: +44 (0) 20 7766 4345

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7839 6800

Address: 42 Craven Street, London, WC2N 5NG, United Kingdom

3. Dr Verezen is an optometrist specialising in visual rehabilitation. He teaches optics, optometry and low vision to ophthalmology residents and low vision rehabilitation to general practitioners. He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry and President of the Dutch optometric association. In addition to clinical practice he is involved in research and has published a number of papers. Dr Verezen has also served on the boards of several organisations such as the Dutch Association for Visual Rehabilitation.