



European Academy  
of Optometry and Optics

PRESS RELEASE

MONDAY 23 MAY 2011

## ACADEMY PRESENTS FIRST FELLOWSHIP TO HELMER SCHWEIZER

---

The European Academy of Optometry and Optics awarded its first ever Fellowships at its recent conference in Prague (6-8 May 2011). Helmer Schweizer was one 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 Helmer Schweizer for excellence and innovation in the fields of optometric research, education and the management of visual healthcare.

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. 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 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.
- **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 Cornelis Anton Verezen** (Netherlands) – in recognition of a life-long commitment to expanding the role of the optometrist in the important area of low vision.
- **Dr Jeffrey Weaver** (USA) – 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 (Netherlands), in recognition of his vision for the development of the European Academy of Optometry and Optics.

Commenting on the award Helmer Schweizer said:

“I am thrilled at being one of the European Academy’s first Fellows. The establishment of the Academy has been an important development for optics in Europe. To be joining this group of special people as a Fellow, as an Ambassador and to help the Academy grow, is 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](mailto: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](http://www.eaoo.info) or contact:

Jane Kielb, Academy Manager

E-mail: [info@eaoo.info](mailto: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. Since qualifying as a “master optician” in 1988, Helmer Schweizer has worked for over 20 years in the contact lens industry with CIBA Vision. He has enjoyed an extremely varied career, with roles across the United States and Europe in research and development, professional affairs, marketing, sales and area management. He completed his Graduate School of Business Administration in Switzerland and his MBA in the United States in 2009. Helmer has served as President of the European Association of the Contact Lens and Lens Care Manufacturers, Chairman of the European Contact Lens Forum and Chairman of the European Contact Lens Forum (ECLF). He is a Fellow of the International Association of Contact Lens Educators, a Fellow of the British Contact Lens Association and a Fellow of the American Academy of Optometry. Helmer teaches the Contact Lens course at the School of Optometry at the University of Novi Sad (Serbia) and lectures at the School of Optometry in Velika Gorica (Croatia). He has published widely.