

30 November 2009

## **NES supports CPD for Optometrists**

As part of its major new workforce development programme to support optometry in Scotland, NHS Education for Scotland (NES) is financing CPD for Optometrists.

A good example is the support given to three of the nine optometrists who passed the College of Optometrists' Common Assessment Examination in Independent Prescribing at Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) on 3 November. The remaining six had started the course before the NES Directorate had been created. The group of nine will be among the first batch of Independent Prescribing Optometrists in the UK.

Another 68 from Scotland are in the pipeline and, with one of the three modules still to complete and clinical experience to gain before they can sit the exam, we anticipate them qualifying in the summer of 2010.

This will place a significant number of prescribing optometrists out in the community and should reduce the numbers of referrals to hospital.

Donald Cameron, Programme Director for Optometry Training in NES said: "There are another 100 optometrists waiting to start the course in March 2010 which is a fantastic figures since, prior to NES funding the modular course, GCU anticipated about 10 optometrists per year would join the course.

"This will mean that almost 15% of the profession will be therapeutically qualified within the next two years. This is a really exciting development for Optometry in Scotland. NES is committed to funding those waiting to join the course in 2010. Thereafter the numbers are expected to drop to

around 20-30 per year as the initial bow wave completes the course and more recently qualified optometrists begin to see this as a natural progression in their career development.

“ NES will certainly assist for the year 2010-11 and thereafter we will reconsider where our funds are best applied.”

**Further information from: Donald Cameron: [donald.cameron@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:donald.cameron@nes.scot.nhs.uk) or 0131 313 8072 or Dr Janet Pooley: [janet.pooley@nes.scot.nhs.uk](mailto:janet.pooley@nes.scot.nhs.uk) or 0131 313 8021**

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#### **Notes to Editors**

1. NHS Education for Scotland is a Special Health Board. We are NHS Scotland's education and training body. Our vision is Better Educated Staff, Better Patient Care. We help provide better patient care by designing, commissioning, quality assuring and, where appropriate, providing education, training and lifelong learning for the 165,000 people who make up the NHS workforce in Scotland. Please visit our website for more information: <http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk> or read our introductory leaflet, *NES The Basics*: <http://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/documents/publications/classa/13958NESTheBasicslores.pdf>

2. In 2006 Optometry Scotland negotiated a new NHS contract with the Scottish Government and comprehensive eye examinations were made available to the whole population. The demands of this contract make it essential that optometrists learn new skills and advance their clinical decision making capacity with the intention that optometry should become the principle provider of primary eye care in the community. To this end the Government has made £1m available every year for promoting education which will enhance the ability of optometry to deliver the terms set out in this new contract. That fund is being disbursed through NES in a new Programme Directorate.

The Optometry workstream NES started operation in March 2009 with the arrival of Donald Cameron and Dr Janet Pooley. Both are practising optometrists and bring a combined total of three days per week to the role.