

Media Release



5 March 2009

NHS Education for Scotland & Optometrists

NES will soon become a familiar name to Scottish Optometrists. NHS Education for Scotland (NES) is a Special Health Board charged by the Scottish Government with managing the educational needs of NHSScotland staff. Optometry has just joined the NES “family” as the latest member of this exciting body. Thanks to Optometry Scotland’s successful negotiations with the Scottish Government, recurring annual funding of £1m has been made available to help Optometrists in Scotland to meet their NHS educational needs.

NES appointed optometrists Mr Donald Cameron and Dr Janet Pooley in January 2009 as job-sharing Programme Directors to manage this funding. Explaining the appointments, Donald Cameron said: “Our remit is to enhance and develop postgraduate optometry education. Optometrists will be given an opportunity to be involved in research and undertake joint training with other healthcare professionals as the work evolves. We very much look forward to working with our colleagues in the optometry profession during this process.

The Scottish Committee of Optometrists and Replay Learning were successful in winning a recent tender process to provide core skills training in GOS skills. NES also invited Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) to undertake some specific training based around their excellent clinical facilities. These organisations will provide a range of free courses. NES also anticipates a series of innovative courses covering a wide range of clinical skill areas becoming available.

NES is also committed to all optometrists in Scotland achieving a high standard of clinical care for their patients and trusts some who have not previously felt attracted to continuing education as part of their professional responsibility will be excited at the opportunities which will present themselves.

NES has also provided pump-prime funding for the GCU’s Independent Prescribing Course which started at the beginning of March. The University were swamped with almost 200 applications which represents some 20% of the profession in Scotland. Although the numbers were capped at

125 this year it is clear there is a commitment from optometrists to enhance their skill levels and NES will have to consider whether the course merits support in future years.

NES is establishing a series of regional training centres equipped with the latest clinical instrumentation, supervised by consultant ophthalmologists. These centres will provide the opportunity for specialist training seeing real patients with new ocular complaints so will ideal for IP course graduates as well as regular community optometrists.

Optometrists in Scotland should definitely be feeling excited about their future. This funding will allow Practitioners to develop an improved career path and better be able to meet the needs of their patients and their own professional aspirations.

Further information from:

Donald Cameron: 0131 313 8072; donald.cameron-OPT@nes.scot.nhs.uk and
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Information on all courses is available on the Optometry Scotland website
www.optometriscotland.org.uk.

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

NES is NHS Scotland's education and training body.

We help provide better patient care by designing, commissioning, quality assuring and, where appropriate, providing education, training and lifelong learning for the 150,000 staff that makes up the NHS workforce in Scotland. We carry out our role in close partnership with NHS Scotland Boards, Higher Education Institutions, Scotland's Colleges and voluntary organisations.

Much of our core work focuses on support for the individual clinical disciplines. However, there is also a growing emphasis on the development of learning opportunities for staff in administrative and clerical roles. These new developments enable us to take an increasingly multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach to our work.

For further details on our work, please visit our website: www.nes.scot.nhs.uk