

Historic affiliation

The Australian College of Optometry (ACO) and the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital (RVEEH) signed an historic affiliation agreement on 16 December 2013. The goals of the agreement are (a) to improve outcomes for patients with complex eye-care needs, (b) to promote a co-operative effort between members of staff of the ACO and members of staff of RVEEH to develop and deliver responsive and high-quality pathways of care for patients and (c) to explore opportunities to provide teaching for undergraduate and postgraduate students. How times have changed! The relationship between optometry and ophthalmology, which was less than cordial for more than 100 years, is now guided by best outcomes for patients and best use of the public health dollar.

The agreement builds on working relationships that have developed over the last few years between the ACO and the Hospital. In 2011, the College and the hospital trialled a triage system in the College's clinic for patients referred to the hospital by general medical practitioners, where the basis for the referral was not urgent and vaguely supported. The purpose was to relieve the hospital of the workload of patients, whose visual problems can be resolved at the primary care level. The trial was successful with only 25 per cent of the patients seen needing referral to the hospital. The balance was treated in the College clinic. This pilot project has led to a continuation of the triage service in the College on a regular basis. In addition, the College now provides contact lens services to the Hospital.

The hospital has also produced new referral guidelines that list the common ocular conditions that should be treated at the primary care level and encourages referral to optometrists rather than

the Hospital for these conditions. The guidelines also require an optometrist's report for some classes of referral. See http://www.eyear.org.au/page/Health_Professionals/Referring_to_the_Eye_and_Ear/

ACO Certificate in Ocular Therapeutics

The Australian College of Optometry has developed a certificate course in ocular therapeutics for optometrists, who are not yet therapeutically qualified and for overseas trained optometrists who are now required to demonstrate therapeutic competence for registration to practise in Australia. The course is largely delivered online with clinical placements obtained locally, and is flexible. Therefore, the course can be undertaken easily by busy practitioners and those practising in rural and remote areas.

The course has now been accredited by the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand and the qualification from the course is recognised by the Optometry Board of Australia. The first intake to the course in February is full. The next intake will be in August. Further information can be found at <http://www.aco.org.au/professional-development/ocular-therapeutics-course> or by telephoning 03 9349 7530.

\$30 million for ARC Centre of Excellence in Integrative Brain Function

Australian Research Council has awarded \$20 million for a Centre of Excellence in Integrative Brain Function. The participating institutions will contribute a further \$9.3 million. The centre is funded for seven years and involves 14 chief investigators in several institutions. The Centre will study the neural basis of attention, prediction and decision-

making through all of the senses, including vision. The National Vision Research Institute (NVRI) will have a big part in the work on vision. The NVRI was founded 40 years ago by Australian optometrists, who gave generously to an appeal to establish it. It operates as an autonomous institution within the Australian College of Optometry and its research continues to be generously supported by optometrists and by Lions International.

Taylor was professor of ophthalmology at the University of Melbourne and in that role led vastly important epidemiological investigations of ocular health in Australia. He also established the Centre for Eye Research Australia and as its Managing Director, oversaw its development as one of Australia's leading eye health research institutes. He is now the Harold Mitchell Chair of Indigenous Eye Health at the University of Melbourne, where he is a leader in closing the gap in Indigenous Australians' ocular health.

Melbourne award to Professor Hugh Taylor AC

Professor Hugh Taylor AC was awarded a Melbourne Award by the City of Melbourne on 16 November 2013 to recognise his personal contributions to improving ocular health for over 30 years. Professor

Taylor was professor of ophthalmology at the University of Melbourne and in that role led vastly important epidemiological investigations of ocular health in Australia. He also established the Centre for Eye Research Australia and as its Managing Director, oversaw its development as one of Australia's leading eye health research institutes. He is now the Harold Mitchell Chair of Indigenous Eye Health at the University of Melbourne, where he is a leader in closing the gap in Indigenous Australians' ocular health.