

ACO–COT to Commence

The Australian College of Optometry's next Certificate in Ocular Therapeutics commences on 17 April. This will be the only Certificate in Ocular Therapeutics run by the College this year and places are limited.

Accredited by the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand and approved by the Optometry Board of Australia, successful completion of the ACO–COT enables scheduled medicines endorsement for registered optometrists in Australia and New Zealand. In 2016 the ACO–COT saw record enrolments and it is anticipated that 2017 enrolments will exceed this level.

Feedback from 2015 graduates found:

- 100 per cent said their course expectations were achieved or exceeded
- 100 per cent were satisfied or extremely satisfied with the course.

Speaking of the course, graduate John Adams said, "it worked well and the self-learning and study meant I could fit in the course around my work and family life. On a daily basis, I felt that the course made me more enthusiastic about work and meant I thought more closely about what I did and I feel it has made me a better optometrist."

The ACO–COT is part of a suite of higher level certificate courses that the ACO is offering, including the Advanced Certificate in Glaucoma and the Certificate in Advanced Contact Lenses, commencing July. Once completed the ACO–COT carries 80 CPD points and 60 CE points in New Zealand.

Visit: aco.org.au/professional-development/ocular-therapeutics-course or phone (AUS) 03 9349 7477.

ACT to Open School of Optometry

The University of Canberra will open a School of Optometry in 2018 and has advertised for an academic to join its university staff. Local optometrist Mark Feltham said the new school will accommodate a skills shortage in the area Australian Capital Territory (ACT).

He said Canberra's shortage was explained by the need to draw students trained in other cities to the ACT, and it was noticeable when replacing people retiring from the industry.

Optometry Australia has voiced concerns in the past about an oversupply of optometry students. A research paper published by Optometry Australia in 2015 modelled results of the relationship between the projected Australian optometric workforce and projected demand for optometric services for the period 2011 to 2036. It estimated a surplus of over 1,200 equivalent full-time optometrists (EFTO) in 2036 for the highest service demand scenario of 13.8 million Medicare services, where 21 hours of a 38-hour week per EFTO were allowed for the provision of optometric services under Medicare. Substantial surpluses were predicted in all states and territories except Queensland, Tasmania and the Northern Territory where predicted supply was within six EFTO of predicted demand.

Optometry New South Wales/ACT CEO Andrew McKinnon said Optometry Australia maintained its view that there is an oversupply

of students acknowledging, however, that there are and most likely always will be shortages in some regional and remote areas of Australia. He said, "Optometry NSW ACT had held discussions with the University of Canberra in an attempt to dissuade them from proceeding with the planned school."

However, "The University has been planning the school over the past four years and strongly believes it will attract students from a large catchment area that extends from the Victorian border out to the east coast up to Nowra and then inland. The University is confident its strategy for student recruitment and its approach to teaching means there will be a strong chance that graduating students will remain in the area to practice optometry."

He said Optometry NSW/ACT would work closely with the University to ensure the school is "as good as it can be, students have the best possible experience and that together we achieve the best outcomes for eye health".

Optometry Australia works on advisory boards with University Schools of Optometry to provide information about the profession's needs, facilitate clinical placements, and support students as they enter the workforce.

Reference

1. onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cxo.12289/full

O Vic President Steps Up to Active Role at SRC

Plans are being finalised for Southern Regional Congress (SRC) in Melbourne next month (May). Speakers will be introduced by Optometry Victoria's new President, Murray Smith.

Mr. Smith said preparing for the event as President, as opposed to attending as a delegate, had given him a new perspective on SRC. "When I turn up to a conference as a delegate, I'm concentrating more on achieving my CPD... I will certainly be more focussed on areas where we are delivering great member benefits but also conscious of areas where we can learn and improve."

Mr. Smith said conferences are an important interface between optometrists and the association, as well as a chance to communicate directly with members and peers.

"We need to be the leaders in education on behalf of our members. Providing a strong clinical program and being at the forefront of industry innovation are the personal expectations I hold for the event."

For the first time Dr. Ben Gaddie will present as a keynote speaker at the conference. Dr. Gaddie is an experienced presenter and co-chair of the International Vision expo meetings.

"Ben is a leader in the industry and we will certainly use the opportunity while he is here to be learning from him, not only from his vast clinical knowledge, but how cutting-edge conferences are delivered internationally."

"We are also looking forward to welcoming Dr. Jim Thimons back. Jim is a real crowd favourite and never fails to deliver great presentations."

Mr. Smith said he was looking forward to catching up on his area of interest at the Sunday breakfast seminar: "How Technology is Changing Optometric Practice". This will be the only opportunity over the weekend to hear from the keynote speakers in a joint presentation.

Southern Regional Congress will be held from 27–28 May at the Pullman Mercure Albert Park. Visit: optometry.org.au/vic/src