



With the optical education system in transit, Alex Webster looks at the challenges and opportunities for members

From CET to CPD and beyond

As we come to the final days of the current three-year CET cycle it seems like a good time to reflect on the past, consider the future and contemplate how ABDO CET can support members.

At the time of writing, I have been with ABDO as head of CET for three months. ABDO CET is one of the largest General Optical Council (GOC) approved providers of CET, and it is a fantastic opportunity to be part of a team dedicated to providing high quality education to ABDO members and beyond.

So far over this CET cycle, ABDO has provided 107,588 CET points to members with more than half of these as interactive points, which we know many members often find more difficult to obtain. In the current situation, where dispensing opticians do not have funding for CET provided by the Department of Health or access to DOCET funds, it is reassuring to know that we are supporting members to complete their GOC registration requirements with CET in *Dispensing Optics* and at UK regional and national events, as a free-of-charge member benefit. Separately, ABDO continues to pursue access to funding for CET.

However, as the GOC continues with the Education Strategic Review (ESR), changes are afoot. This essential work will shape the future of education for trainee dispensing opticians, contact lens opticians and optometrists, with the aim to ensure that the professionals of our industry are equipped and able to safely provide the services the public need both now and in the future. The reality is that the outcomes of the ESR will affect every GOC registrant, as it will directly have an effect on CET.

CPD SCHEME DELAYED

As part of the ESR the GOC has launched a public consultation on draft standards for education providers and learning outcomes for students. When finalised, it is intended that these learning outcomes will form the basis for a future continuing professional development (CPD) scheme for registrants, that will replace CET.

At the GOC council meeting on 14 November, council members voted in a new

three-year cycle of CET, delaying a move to CPD as originally proposed. This longer time frame allows the ESR to be fully completed before making changes to mandatory professional education, enabling any necessary considerations to be reviewed before a new CPD scheme is implemented.

ABDO will continue to work closely with the GOC and the ESR to ensure our members are fully represented as registrants and we will endeavour to keep members up-to-date with the changes as they are confirmed. Although a CPD scheme with the GOC is a few years away, ABDO CET is fully supportive of a move to CPD and we look forward to changes in mandatory professional education requirements, in the hope that they allow dispensing opticians and contact lens opticians to flourish and develop as respected healthcare professionals.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

CET can be a polarising issue amongst GOC registrants. Many seek out opportunities to affirm their knowledge and learn new developments in research, whilst others struggle to see the relevance of mandatory education on their day-to-day work and end up chasing points or competencies to remain on the register.

The reality of the situation is that CET or CPD is necessary for us to be considered healthcare professionals. As the landscape of healthcare continues to change, it is

evermore essential that we are recognised and respected as healthcare professionals – not only within our industry but also further afield, to pharmacists, nurses, orthoptists, ophthalmologists, doctors, etc.

All healthcare professions are required by the government to revalidate their competence to perform their role and this is administered by the relevant healthcare regulator, for us by the GOC with CET. Why is this needed? One way to consider this is to imagine ourselves as a member of the general public, because that's what we are when we visit any other healthcare professional for our personal needs.

So, let's say you went to see the GP about some minor ailment; would you be happy if that GP had done no further education since they qualified 20 years ago? If they had not read one research paper or article or attended a lecture? In this sort of circumstance, it would be easy to conceive the treatment you might receive from this GP would be out of date. Maybe it wouldn't be as effective, maybe it would take longer to work or maybe it would now be considered completely inappropriate.

As a low-risk profession, it may be easy to think that continuing professional education isn't as important for us as it is for doctors – but I am sure that if we were to ask our patients, they may hold a different view. Even small changes in how we practise or communicate, following on from something

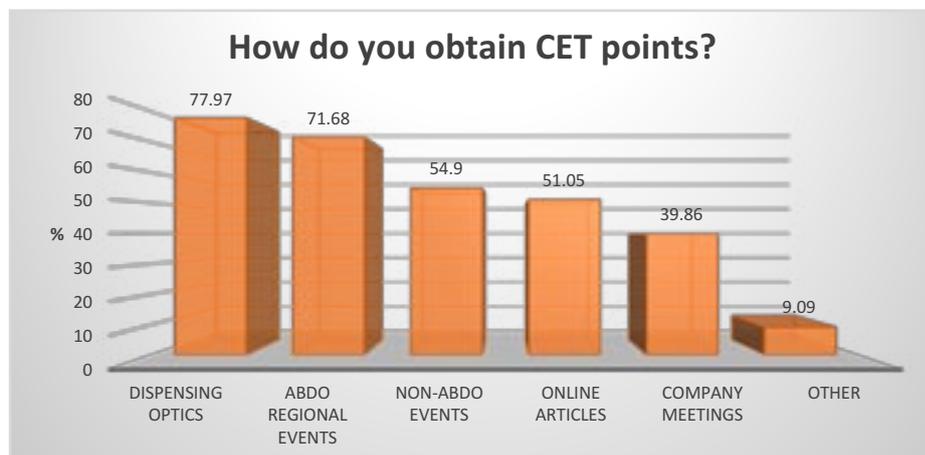


Figure 1: The majority of members obtain their CRT points through *Dispensing Optics*

What could ABDO do to make CET more accessible to you personally?



Figure 2: Most members would like to see more local CET events

we picked up at a lecture or a peer discussion, can have an impact on our patients' lives.

In just the last few years the research and understanding in areas such as dry eye, myopia control, freeform lens design and digital device use has significantly changed the advice and products we provide to our patients.

CET GO LOCAL

ABDO recently conducted a member survey on CET. In the main, the results reflect the ongoing feedback obtained at ABDO regional events – and some of the responses to the survey questions can be seen in Figures 1-3.

At ABDO CET, our purpose is to provide high quality education that is relevant, supports and advances dispensing opticians and enables our members to fulfil their professional regulatory requirements. We hold around 60 national and regional CET events each year and constantly assess feedback from attendees on venues, travel and location.

What we can do is continue to hold events that are accessible to as many members as possible. However, what we cannot do is be in every single city, town and village across the whole of the UK. This inevitably means many members will feel like

our events aren't local – justifiably so for those living in the less populated, remoter areas of the UK. To help these members, back in 2017 ABDO CET launched CET Go Local.

If a member is in a location we are not bringing a regional event to, then CET Go Local allows them to work with the CET team to hold an event for 20 to 30 people in their area. All the member needs to do is find a suitable venue and be the contact with the CET office. ABDO CET will suggest a programme and provide speakers/facilitators, invite local members and take care of the administration. More details can be found at www.abdo.org.uk/cet/go-local

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

At the ABDO CET Department, we are currently working on projects with the endeavour to provide more, easily accessible CET to our members. Extra CET in the *Dispensing Optics* magazine is one consideration. However, this relatively expensive and time-consuming format of CET would not help with the GOC requirement of a minimum number of interactive points.

Exploration of online possibilities, including apps, is currently underway across the whole of ABDO with the ongoing

development of our website. We also have exciting possibilities to consider with the opening of the National Resource Centre and the fantastic facilities available there.

The CET survey also provided valuable feedback from members on the areas of practice they would like CET to cover. As we make the slow move from CET towards CPD, this is an important consideration. We would like to see members attending events or participating in online or distance learning education not because they have to gain the points, but because they find the area of education interesting and relevant to their practice. We are also working with other ABDO departments to consider providing more than just clinical education at some of our regional events.

Although CPD is some time away, I believe we have a duty to assist members in understanding what CPD is and any new areas of consideration that may arise for a dispensing optician in relation to continuing education. With this in mind, ABDO CET will have a regular feature throughout 2019 in *Dispensing Optics* where, each month, we will explore some of the professional education practice and concepts that are common amongst many of the other healthcare professions, but less familiar in ours.

Working with others in our field, we will examine areas such as reflective practice, clinical audit and evidence-based practice to name but a few. This will also provide us with an opportunity to inform members of any GOC education changes that are confirmed throughout this period.

Although there are changes ahead, I truly believe these are exciting times for our profession and I look forward to supporting the membership ongoing. At the CET Department, we always welcome feedback and ideas from members, as well as being there for support. Please feel free to contact myself, Joanne Abbott (CET coordinator) or Sue Bennett (CET administrator) with your ideas or questions. Telephone 01206 734 155 or email abdocet@abdo.org.uk

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The ABDO CET team from left: Sue Bennett, Alex Webster and Joanne Abbott

What would you like to see more of at CET events?



Figure 3: Pathology, paediatrics, dry eye and low vision are popular CET topics