



Three members share their experiences of attending CPD events this year, in an article introduced by Alex Webster

Experiencing CPD first-hand

Throughout the year, this series has looked at different areas associated with continuing professional development (CPD) and life-long learning in the healthcare professions. In the final article of the 2019 series, we have asked three ABDO members who have attended CPD events this year to share their reasons for choosing these events and their experiences.

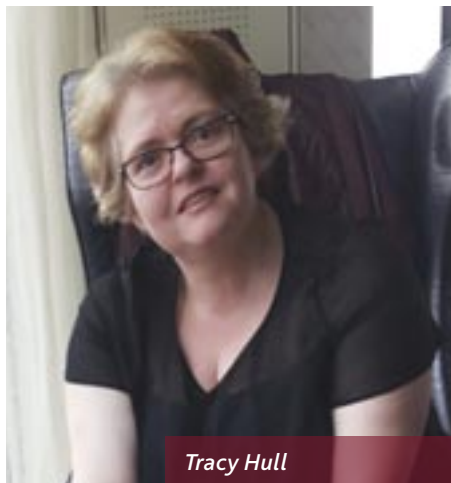
NEVER STOP LEARNING

Tracy Hull is a contact lens optician who works at Boots Opticians and Costco. Tracy attended an ABDO Contact Lens Masterclass CPD evening held at Bradford University's eye clinic facilities.

"Having qualified in 1996, you may wonder why I should choose to attend a contact lens masterclass. Surely I should have seen most things in my career by now, you might think. As it is, I have always felt you can never stop learning or improving. I find that I always come away with something that improves the way I look after my patients.

"The evening was learning in a different style and level to CET sessions I have attended previously, in that we did some work in the consultation rooms. Also, the various backgrounds of the attendees meant we were able to share our experiences.

"In the consultation room, we reviewed



Tracy Hull

fitting multifocal contact lenses and the different techniques each manufacturer recommends. Some fitting guides have changed since the lenses were first launched and we discovered not all of us follow the guide and sometimes when we don't, we end up taking longer to get to an end point. I must admit, I have taken this back to practice and following the fitting guide does on the whole save time.

"In the second part of the evening, we reviewed rigid gas permeable [RGP] lens fitting. It's 25 years since I studied this at College and sometimes you need a refresher. We looked at steep and flat fitting lenses and how often we have all the clues before we actually look at the lenses. It's funny, but for a few weeks after I seemed to have had an abundance of RGP patients. The refresher session has helped me problem-solve some of the RGP patients coming to see me as they were struggling.

"Finally, we spent the last part of the evening conducting traditional prescription analysis in a peer review, establishing which optical solutions, including contact lenses and spectacles, would solve a variety of problems.

"My colleagues attending the event brought a wide variety of experiences from optometrists to students awaiting exam results. A few of us have been doing this for years, but I felt we could all share and take something away from the evening to make us better at what we do."

EYE-OPENING INSIGHTS

Joanne Newsome is a locum dispensing optician and ABDO practical examiner. Joanne attended the ABDO Changing Vision CPD event at the ABDO National Resource Centre, Birmingham, in February.

"I was curious to see how a CPD event would be run while also having the opportunity to gain CET points. Reading through the agenda on the ABDO website, I was interested to see the focus of the day was low vision and the ageing eye. As a locum dispensing optician, I see many practices



Joanne Newsome

focusing on aspects of low vision but some only providing very basic knowledge, so I was looking forward to learning more as well as topping up my educational knowledge for my role as an ABDO examiner.

"During the course of the day, we were able to try first-hand the different types of magnifiers available and how to engage with a patient on their use without being overbearing. We would use our professional knowledge in the communication of low vision aids and be aware of the patient's emotions and expectations. This was discussed in respect to the different low vision conditions and the symptoms a patient can experience, some of which you may not associate with typical low vision eye conditions.

"One of the highlights of the day for me was the 'eye drops user-review' workshop. Everyone knows how to put eye drops in you're thinking and, honestly, I thought I did too. Then the different type of drops appeared, differing in application method to the consistency of the drops. Even the type of bottle they are supplied in has an effect. To then be made aware of different types of applicator aids you can supply was a real benefit to the instillation method.

"This session has certainly helped me advise patients in practice. We can be the first support in this area. Patients rarely admit to the hospital that they are struggling with the drop instillation, but



Andrew Price discussing eye drop instillation at the Changing Vision CPD day

may be open for our help and advice.

"From discussing the day with colleagues old and new, to seeing newly-qualified students who attended the day, all of us came out with renewed interest in these areas.

"Since the CPD event, not only have I seen practitioners discuss symptoms from Charles Bonnet Syndrome to the early effects of cataracts while managing a patient's expectations, but I personally have dispensed low vision aids to a patient I wouldn't have thought could benefit from this type of assistance in the workplace. This came from having the confidence and knowledge to recommend and show examples of how different solutions can help in everyday tasks. Not one solution fits all and nor should it.

"If this is the progression of the new CPD events, then I will be booking my days out of practice to experience more and hope many others will too."

BE THE BEST YOU CAN BE

Keith Williams is a contact lens optician, independent practice owner and ABDO contact lens practical examiner who has also worked in hospital practice. In 2015, he achieved his contact lens advance diploma (Hons). Keith attended the 2019 British Contact Lens Association (BCLA) conference held in Manchester in June.

"As a contact lens optician who qualified in 1995, it may be easy to become complacent and fulfil the minimum requirements for CET in order to satisfy our regulatory standards. Some practitioners may see CET as a necessary evil to maintain their professional license to practise. Completing CET in journals or online may well satisfy the General Optical Council's requirements, however, it does become pretty dull after a while.

"This is where a true professional can make their own career and others more interesting, by taking an active interest in

their CPD. For me, the ultimate aim of CPD is to be the best I can be in my career, and to maintain my passion and enthusiasm as a contact lens optician. This approach not only helps me as an individual to continue to develop, but also encourages other members of my practice team to actively develop their skills too.

"CPD may not always contribute toward the CET bean counter, but the additional knowledge and fulfilment you achieve far outweigh the bean counter culture that optics has become.

"I am a regular attendee of the BCLA biennial clinical conference. I was privileged to attend the 2019 conference in Manchester. What were my reasons for attending the event? First and foremost, it was to liaise with like-minded practitioners who have a passion for their profession. I attended a mixture of CET and non-CET workshops, peer discussions and clinical lectures. Ranging from a hands-on live view of acanthamoeba, in front of my very own eyes, which was truly mind-blowing, to a peer discussion with doctors, optometrists and contact lens opticians all on the same table discussing topics relating to lid lumps and bumps.



Keith Williams

"It may seem a little daunting to sit with professionals who are higher up the hierarchy of optics than yourself, but where else could you attend an event that offers the opportunity to share ideas with such a broad range of views?

"This one session alone was very thought provoking, with each of us approaching the case records from a diverse range of clinical approaches. It highlighted the fact that not one person knows all of the answers, but as a group of professionals together we can broaden our outlook and approach to clinical decision making. This not only benefits our patients but also enables us as practitioners to continue to develop professionally.

"Attending BCLA or similar events also allows you to network with people who you wouldn't necessarily come into contact with during the normal course of practice. This for me, as an independent practice owner, is hugely important and a great way of exchanging ideas that can help my practice to develop and grow bigger and better.

"Over the years of attending BCLA events and taking charge of my own professional development has helped me to open many windows of opportunity. Rather than being stuck in a little dark room day-to-day, CPD has enabled me to become a practice owner, ABDO contact lens practical examiner, hospital practitioner and I am currently completing minor eye conditions services (MECS) training to add yet another facet to my career.

"My advice is to take charge of your career, enjoy what you do more than ever by continuing to develop professionally, and take as many opportunities to attend conferences as possible to help develop a fulfilling career in optics."

FOCUSING ON THE FUTURE

There are many opportunities to take part in CPD and hopefully Tracy, Joanne and Keith may have inspired you to look a little further afield than CET. It may be that you find a course that is worth investing the time to take a day out of practice to complete, or maybe a webinar you attend from the comfort of your own home.

ABDO will continue to develop its programme of CPD throughout 2020, alongside our UK wide regional CET events. As always, details of ABDO's events can be found on the ABDO website. In 2020, we will look to provide learning resources to help support you and your CPD needs.

ALEX WEBSTER MSC, PGDipE, FBDO CL, FHEA, FBCLA is ABDO head of CET.