MOORFIELDS CORNEA & EXTERNAL DISEASES SERVICE

From the time that sub-specialty services were established Moorfields in the early 1990s, the clinical service in cornea and external disease has been separate from the cataract and the refractive services. It has grown steadily both in volume and staff numbers. Introduction of a subspecialist consultant on-call rota in 2002 was a key development, providing emergency advice and management of corneal problems for Moorfields colleagues and the A&E department. With the marked increase in out-of-hours work in Moorfields, we now provide a very busy acute care service for patients in London and far beyond.

Led by Stephen Tuft since 2008, the consultant staff comprises John Dart, Linda Ficker, Bruce Allan, Frank Larkin, David Gartry, Julian Stevens, Mark Wilkins, Vincenzo Maurino, Valerie Saw and Romesh Angunawela. Several consultants have significant commitment in the cataract service and several labour in the golden fields of the refractive service. Dedicated paediatric subspecialty clinics have been run in the Children’s Eye Centre since 2006 (Steve Tuft and Frank Larkin). In addition to City Road, clinics and surgery are undertaken at St. George’s Hospital (Mark Wilkins and Romesh Angunawela) and a weekly clinic in Watford (Frank Larkin). We have two academic clinical lecturers, six fellows, chosen in an annual international competition the standard of which seems to rise every year and five specialist trainees.

Corneal surgery is supported by our eye bank, now named Moorfields Lions Eye Bank in recognition of financial support from Lions for the building of the new and expanded bank in 2007. Over 500 corneal transplants are undertaken annually, about one sixth of the UK annual total, with a case-mix which includes a high proportion of complex cases. A change from full thickness transplantation to selective posterior lamellar replacement in Fuchs’ endothelial disease and pseudophakic corneal oedema will shortly lead, on account of savings in operating theatre time, to preparation of these thin grafts from donor corneoscleral discs by our excellent eye bank technicians.

The service is very active in research and makes a significant contribution to activity in the Biomedical Research Centre. Leading the way in translation of laboratory bench research to patient care has been our programme of limbal stem cell transplantation, led by Steve Tuft and Prof Julie Daniels and supported by the Cells for Sight Stem Cell bank. In this programme over 40 patients have received cell transplants since 2006. We also have active programmes of research, backed by full-time research students, in pemphigoid (John Dart & Valerie Saw) and corneal transplantation (Frank Larkin).

Moorfields resources and reputation make it an exceptional institution in which to train in cornea and external diseases and to work as a consultant. A continually expanding range of anterior segment imaging technologies and up-to-date lasers are available (by arrangement) to our NHS patients in the well-equipped refractive surgery facility. In addition of course we have valuable support from our optometrists and Moorfields Pharmaceuticals, purveyor of almost any unpreserved formulation of drops that one could wish for.

Frank Larkin  MD FRCPI FRCOphth
March 2012