The Optometry Department

Daniel Ehrlich MCOptom DCLP. Head of Optometry

Moorfields’ optometrists now provide outpatient care in almost every outpatient subspecialty at almost every Moorfields site. The key change in the past two decades is that this care is provided not only through the core optometry services of refraction, contact lenses, and low vision services but in "extended roles" as well as in community eye care pathways. Additional highlights are our joint provision of higher clinical qualifications for optometrists in partnership with UCL Institute of Ophthalmology, plus investment on our spectacle and contact lens laboratories.

Moorfields Optometry Department is a product of merging the Departments of Visual Assessment and the Contact Lens Department; the current unit benefiting from a unique combination of optometric clinical, education, research & manufacturing activities in one cohesive department.

Core optometry

Contact Lens Service

Our Contact Lens Service is the largest clinic in the “western world” providing clinically necessary contact lenses with subspecialty clinics at City Rd in Scleral Contact Lens on Monday and Wednesday, Paediatrics on Tuesday and Cosmetic/prosthetic lens clinics on Wednesday. We are in the first year of implementing our 3 year service review, meeting the increased demand for contact lenses with evening clinics initially on Tuesday and Thursday Evening. Working alongside the Corneal and External Disease clinics we now provide a contact lens service at St George’s, Croydon, Northwick Park, Ealing as well as at City Rd. Over the past couple of years we have updated our contact lens laboratory to enable us to increase our in-house range of RGP contact lenses and manufacture bespoke impression RGP scleral lenses utilising CAD software.

Low Vision Service

Moorfields Low Vision Clinic is the largest in Europe. We provide LVA services at Croydon, St George’s, Northwick Park, Ealing, and City Rd with specialist paediatric low vision clinics. We take referrals from all ophthalmic subspecialties and benefit from close links and support from Eye Clinic Liaison Officers, and the Trust counselling service.
Refraction Service

The department provides refraction support to outpatient clinics across the Trust, with clinics expanding to meet the developments of the paediatric and external disease services amongst others. We also work with the Clinical Research Facility to provide primarily, but not only, measures of visual outcome (refraction, visual acuity, contrast sensitivity and reading speeds) with an increasing role in the accreditation of other sites.

Spectacle Dispensing and Manufacturing Service

Our Dispensing Opticians run one of the few dedicated paediatric spectacle dispensing clinics in the UK as well as working in clinics across sites dispensing ~100 pairs of spectacles a day supported by our in house surfacing and edging laboratories based at City Rd. Our team have embraced supporting innovative work across the hospital, most recently supporting the development of spectacle attachments to assist in the management of blepharospasm.

Optometrist extended roles:

Optometrists work beyond their core competencies in many areas that were traditionally the domain of ophthalmologists. This work is developed with and underpinned by close working with consultant ophthalmologists. The roles were deveoped following the groundbreaking work undertaken by optometrist Michael Banes in Moorfields glaucoma clinics; Michael sadly passed away last year but leaves a legacy that includes over 50 optometrists working in extended role in glaucoma. The roles have evolved to incorporate the College of Optometrist’s professional higher clinical qualifications in glaucoma and independent prescribing. We have now optometrists working in extended role in A&E, Adnexal, Cataract, External Disease, Glaucoma outpatients and laser, Medical Retina, Paediatrics, Urgent Care, Uveitis and Vitreo-retinal clinics and we have more recently set up optometrist-led glaucoma clinics.

Community:

We are now successfully running cataract direct referral community pathways in our satellites in Bedford and Potters Bar with plans to further utilise these models in other Moorfields sites.
**Education:**

We are in our first year of delivering higher clinical optometry qualifications in a joint programme with the Institute of Ophthalmology/UCL for both community based and hospital optometrists.

We provide a clinical training programme for 4 pre registered optometrists and 5 ‘Optometry residents’, many of whom have gone on to take leading academic and hospital roles in optometry (& as many of you know, also in Ophthalmology!). We have a rapidly expanding role in delivering clinical training in core hospital optometry and extended roles for both our own and for external staff (including referral refinement for community optometrists).

**Research:**

Research within the Optometry Department is primarily focused on Visual Assessment and Imaging, with work being further stratified into a number of specialty themes including: basic psychophysics, glaucoma, medical retina, low-vision and external disease. Members of the department, in collaboration with colleagues from Moorfields and the Institute of Ophthalmology, have been both PI’s and co-applicants on successful major grant applications (NIHR, the College of Optometrists, Fight for Sight and Heidelberg Engineering, GmbH) in recent years. Furthermore, the results of this work have been published in a number of leading journals and have led to the development of novel vision tests.

The department has tripled in size over the past decade, primarily in response to the increasing demand for extended-role optometrists across Moorfields' sites, with the largest of these expansions in the past year. These developments have come out of the ongoing close collaboration and from the support of the clinical services.