

Optometry Northern Ireland Annual General Meeting
8.00 pm on Wednesday 29 May 2019
Stormont Hotel, Belfast

Present

Judith Ball	Lynn Mackey
S J B Barbour	Alan McCandless
Matthew Brennan	Paula McCaughan
Karen Breslin (Chair)	Geoff McConville
Lorcan Butler	Roisin McGuinness
Jill Campbell	Sinead McGurk
Michael Coates	Leigh Nelson
Tanya Connor	Frank Petticrew
Breige Crossin	David Robinson
Paula Cunningham	Alan Rundle
Steven Harding	Sylvia Watt
Eavan Kennedy	Timothy Young

Apologies

David Barnes	Faith Mills
Wendy Coates	Richard Owens
Deirdre McAree	Andrew Petticrew
Moyra McClure	Rachel Scott
Brian McKeown	William Stockdale

In attendance: Sara Ball

1 Chairman's Welcome – Dr Karen Breslin

Karen welcomed everyone and introduced Professor Augusto Azuara Blanco, from Queen's University School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences. Professor Blanco was accompanied by Professor David Mackie (Australia) who is running a separate trial for low dose atropine as treatment of childhood myopia. There is a small initial fee of £20 per patient referred into the study. For further details either email him or contact, Emma McConnell, Ruth Hogg or Kathryn Saunders.

2 Apologies

Apologies were received from the above.

3 Chairman's Report – Dr Karen Breslin

Karen said that this was her third and final AGM report as Chair of Optometry Northern Ireland.

As always, 2018-19 had been a busy year with many challenges. At committee level Karen thanked Geri Dynan who had stood down from her position as ABDO

representative, which she had held for five years. This position is now occupied by Dee McAree, who has moved from the role of Treasurer. Karen thanked Dee for her hard work. Karen welcomed Eavan Kennedy who was elected at last year's AGM and like the rest of our committee, has contributed hugely to ONI work throughout the year.

Following ONI engagement with non levy paying practices, Karen was pleased to announce that there have been several new practices signed up to the Ophthalmic Levy scheme.

ONI and the Ophthalmic committee had continued to work together to support each other in their work. Karen congratulated Mr Alan McCandless on his appointment to the Chair and wished him every success in this role.

Karen stated that in spite of the current political climate in Northern Ireland, ONI had continued to engage with the Department of Health. Changes in personnel there have added to the challenge.

ONI continue to work with the NIOS on Committee and informally when necessary. ONI have continued to meet regularly with the Raymond Curran and his team at the HSCB.

Karen had attended the annual five nations meeting in March where there were reports from individual regions and discussion on the future of optometry in the UK. These are difficult and challenging times for the profession with AI on the horizon and increased online sales. ONI have made a commitment to work together with our partner nations and the professional bodies to help shape the future.

Karen had also attended events and met with representatives from various professional bodies, and had responded to various consultations throughout the year including the very important ongoing GOC Education Review.

Karen then addressed primary care optometry:

- The roll out of Northern Ireland Primary Eyecare Assessment and Referral Service (NIPEARS), has continued and all patients across the province now have access to this excellent service in over 200 practices with over 400 practitioners involved. In addition to how a service works for a practice or patient satisfaction, the success of a scheme comes down to whether it is good value for money and this service is closely scrutinized on an annual basis during probity checks. ONI hope the funding continues to be secured for this invaluable service and as a committee we will continue to push for it to remain in place.
- Local enhanced service LES 1 (Intraocular repeat measures) continues with over 380 providers.
- Local enhanced service LES 2 (enhanced case finding) has over 100 practitioners now trained to deliver the service. Karen encouraged

practitioners to pay attention to recent NICE updates regarding service specifications for LES 1 and LES 2 Services.

- The next step of the Glaucoma/Ocular hypertension pathway is in place with patients accessing this service within the Belfast Trust. Out of 200 patients contacted, approximately 75% had indicated that they are happy to be monitored in primary care. This service is for Ocular hypertension monitoring and is delivered by practitioners who have participated in ECHO and hold a Professional Certificate in Glaucoma. Secondary care clinicians suggest suitable patients and the patient is asked to select a primary care monitoring optometrist from a list. ONI continue to lobby the HSCB to open this up to a larger group of practitioners.
- Out of 275 practices, 225 are now enabled within the Clinical Communications Gateway (CCG), which allows practitioners to refer patients electronically. Not all practices are using the facility, and some GP's are becoming reluctant to process referrals from non participating practices. ONI acknowledge that there have been some initial problems and these have been fed back to HSCB for resolution. We also continue to lobby for feedback from secondary care.
- Northern Ireland has become the first area in the UK for primary care optometrists to have access to a patient's Electronic Care Record (NIECR). ONI are lobbying the HSCB to expand the amount of visible information, including orthoptics data but there are technical difficulties surrounding this. From this month Diabetic screening information will be available and eye casualty information will follow.
- Karen reminded contractors to check their HSCNI email accounts on a regular basis (preferably daily), to avoid missing out on opportunities, as this is the primary method of communication that the HSCB use.
- Regarding Post Cataract Care, the Daycare Elective Care Centres Project was launched in 2018, providing an exciting opportunity for primary optometric practices to be involved in the post-operative care of their patients. During negotiation, ONI worked to secure a fair remuneration for the required protocols, resulting in a favourable agreement. Karen thanked everyone involved in this process for their support and advice. The process highlighted that existing communication between ONI committee and members was not fit for purpose. ONI have addressed this and put systems in place to allow us to contact individual contractors. Karen thanked everyone for engaging in this process. ONI will be contacting contractors to gather individual optometric practitioner information. Better communication will strengthen community optometry and ensure that members can have their say.

Going forward in 2019, under new leadership, ONI will aim to continue the good work that has been ongoing. Contact can be made through our website with any feedback or issues you would like us to raise at committee.

Karen thanked the NIOS for their continued support, the practitioners for their engagement in new initiatives, the council members and Sara for their hard work over the past twelve months.

There were no questions from the floor.

4 Treasurer's Report – Dr Karen Breslin

Karen Breslin presented the accounts (YE 31 March 2019).

Expenditure	
NIOS	40 170
Salaries	21 500
Chair/Sec/AGM Committee Expenses	5 245
Accountancy Fees	1 000
Room Hire	200
Miscellaneous	885
TOTAL	69 000

Notes

AGM expenses 2018 – Speaker Richard Edwards
Outstanding Chair and Secretarial expenses to be paid
Website – Google required update - £275.00
Levy payment – slow rise since 2013
Surplus for YE 2019 £8 494
Total accumulated surplus to date: £ 164 609

Funds are being held in a current account as it was felt that they should be accessible. There may be an opportunity for leadership and negotiation training.

Balance Sheet

Net Current Assets £164 609
- Improved cash position year on year (+£ 13 548)
- Increased level of reserves year on year (+£8 494)
- Increase in corporate liability tax to £36

Financial Projection:

- Total Net Assets £164 609 as at March 2019

- Total Cash Holdings at 31/03/19 £167 559
- ONI aims to maintain current levels with moderate expenses in 2019. Continue to engage with our colleagues to encourage membership and improve communication via social media and other methods.

Projected Income 2019/20 £75 000

Reimburse NIOS 37 500

Expenditure

- Salaries 21 500
- Committee Expenses 5 500
- Accountancy Fees 1 500
- Meeting Rooms 1 000 (AGM)
- Other 2 000
- Total 31 500

Thanks to Deirdre McAree and Moyra McClure. Thanks to Jackson Andrews for their work in preparation of the accounts.

Questions

Michael Coates suggested that as the balance in the current account (£91,000) was over FCAS protective figure, consideration should be given to moving funds or setting up a second account.

Michael also suggested that it might be worth employing professional negotiators (maybe those who did the GP and Consultant contract). Raymond Curran has a team behind him. Karen agreed that this was a good point.

Karen concluded by asking for a proposer and seconder for the accounts. They were proposed by Hamish Barbour and seconded by Michael Coates.

It was agreed to keep Jackson Andrews as accountants.

5 Constitution

Karen presented the draft constitution (copy circulated), which a small team has been working on. Following discussion the following points were made:

- a) Function – negotiation with the Department
- b) Representing optometrist interests, not the patient
- c) Not a membership – represent everyone (non levy). Remove “member”
- d) Representation - “ONI shall represent optometrists, dispensing opticians and optical bodies corporate working in Northern Ireland”
- e) Statutory levy – much more complicated – requires an act of parliament. Not now.
- f) ONI are moving forward on so many fronts – membership should see the benefit of the levy.

- g) Should there be a set levy as opposed to % levy? Total NHS fee including dispensing fees.
- h) High NHS may not necessarily be in a deprived area.
- i) Any flat fee cannot be per practice but per optometrist.
- j) ONI represents levy payers and non-levy payers.
- k) Karen – following approaching non-levy paying practices, some have signed up, some don't provide the services, and some were concerned that ONI would know how much NHS business was being done.
- l) "Up to" 16 members and "Up to" eight elected representatives – ideally 4 from each independent and multiple.
- m) Ability to co-op somebody onto committee before AGM
- n) Accept proposal of nominations for committee from the floor at AGM
- o) In case of a contentious issue – should everyone on committee be contacted?
- p) Quorum – 50%
- q) Send draft constitution to a financial institution or solicitor – before ratification.
- r) Levy increase – bigger than 50% go to EGM
- s) Amendment of Constitution – 2/3 of members to approve? EGM.
- t) Draft of constitution including proposed amendments will be sent out prior to EGM.

These points will be explored further at the next ONI committee meeting and then the new constitution will be presented to the profession.

6 Elections

Karen asked if there were any other nominations for committee. There were no further nominations. In absence of further nominees, Karen proposed that the following be elected "en bloc" to committee. This was seconded by Hamish Barbour. There were no objections.

Jill Campbell, Tanya Connor, Paula Cunningham, Steven Harding, Geoff McConville.

7 Any Other Business

Alan McCandless highlighted an opportunity for practitioners to sit on the BSO Ophthalmic Committee, a statutory committee, which provides a forum for practitioners to feed back to BSO. Four meetings per year with paid expenses. Each Health Board (5 boards) has a representative and multiples also. These positions will be advertised by NIOS and ONI. Any interested parties need to submit an application for potential interviews in August.

Alan Rundle thanked Karen on behalf of the profession for all her hard work as Chair over the past 3 years.