Central Mersey LOC Meeting, 9th June 2009.

Minutes;

Present
Sally Jones, Finlay Rosenburgh, Bob Wilkes, John Allen, Ian Carr, Gordon Elliot, Gail Fotheringham, David Lundstrom, Ian White, Andrew Dagnall, Stuart Jones, Graham Freeman, Paul Gilmore, Keith Williams & Natalie Reynolds.

Apologies
Paul Morgan, Christine Ramsdale & Richard Shaw.

Minutes from last meeting
Gordon proposed the minutes were a correct and proper account, of the last meeting, this was seconded and unanimously agreed.

Matters Arising
Further to Quality in Optometry documents being sent out in Warrington PCT as discussed in January meeting, Halton & St Helens PCT have now sent out their documentation. It suggests that the questionnaire should be completed online (sent to the PCT) but Bob also recommends saving as a PDF file for in-house reference. It is recommended that at least parts 1&2 are completed and Bob says he can analyse the results using his new software.

One area of the document that caused some concern for members was of the disposal of ‘clinical waste’. It was mentioned that a company called ‘PHS’ now provide such a service to Opticians and that the clinical waste issue would also be queried at all future practice inspection visits.

DRSS
a) Urgent Referrals;
A number of members have experienced a deficiency in ‘Urgent Referrals’ via DRSS. Paul Gilmore gave anecdotal evidence of having flagged up an urgent referral on screen and also telephoning Mill Brow, yet his referral still took 5 months! Bob suggested this is highly unusual and asked all members to now contact him regarding all urgent referrals until further notice. In due course a new ‘Failsafe Officer’ will be appointed to personally deal with all future urgent referral cases.

b) DRS Committees;
Gordon is to join the External Quality Assessment (EQA) Committee. The PCT were unwilling to fund any LOC involvement, but it has been agreed that the LOC will pay Gordon’s expenses since it is vital we are represented on this committee.
Gordon has also joined the DRS ‘shadow’ committee and has attended one meeting so far. He informs us that it has a very wide-ranging remit and as such discusses many non-clinical issues. Gordon is now aware of an additional sub-committee that discusses clinical matters only and wishes to know whether he should attend that in addition to the main committee – a decision on this was not reached.

The latest news is that the new DRSS contract is still a long way off despite being needed imminently. Gordon felt that the bureaucratic nature of the committee meant that no real urgency on this issue was displayed. Another possible reason for the delay was the long-term absence of a senior member of the PCT dealing with this issue (Debbie).
From Gordon’s short time on the committee, he does feel that Optometrists may be sidelined from future DRSS involvement if we do not react positively to all future proposals made by the committee. He also suggests that since Warrington’s ‘screen-only’ scheme differs from the 3 other areas in Central Mersey, hence they should look towards a ‘screen+grade’ system so that they fall into line.

c) As always, DRSS provoked some additional debate;
Slit-Lamp Grading was discussed. The current scheme is not auditing slit-lamp grades, but it is believed to be the intention of the scheme to do so in future. Andrew Dagnall reports that his Optometrist Grader is increasingly concerned that she may be liable with respect to concurrent non-diabetic pathologies visible on the images. David Lundstram suggested that with the increasing use of lay-screeners as per some optical multiples and the use of lay-graders as per Medical Imaging Ltd in Knowsley PCT, how we can expect such laypersons to have knowledge of such other pathologies. Ian White also questioned the accuracy of the visual acuities assessed by laypersons.

**Wet AMD Referrals**
Graham Freeman informed the committee that there would be a launch party by Novartis in September 2009 to mark the start of the new scheme. They will be inviting GP’s, Optometrists and Ophthalmologists and they will be providing all the new documentation pertaining to the scheme and also a few ‘goodies’. Graham will be the ‘AMD Treatment Manager’ for the scheme and he says he will accept referrals as early as August 2009 (prior to the scheme) since the referral form is already available on the LOC website. Current expectations are for 90-110 new referrals per month, with 70-80 requiring treatment. Treatment decisions will be made on the same day as the initial appointment to maximise clinic efficiency and Warrington Hospital will accept cross-PCT referrals. Bob suggested that if referrals are to be Emailed to Graham, it would be a good idea if we all registered our interest for NHS Email accounts since these generally provide better security.

**NICE**
Despite the reports in Optometry Today, Perkins Tonometry is NOT acceptable under current NICE guidelines.
Sally has recently sent a letter to Clive Peckar requesting that Gonioscopy and Pachymetry should be done on all NICE referrals and that the information should be relayed back to the referring Optometrist. Sally says that without this information, if the IOP’s remain the same at the patient’s next visit the Optometrist will be duty-bound to re-refer under the current guidance. It was suggested that although these additional tests may be possible, the Hospital are not required to do so unless/until an OHT pathway is introduced. Despite it being mooted at the last meeting that a Gonioscopy workshop could be arranged for LOC members to further their skills in this area, Sally suggests this is currently pointless since no accreditation scheme is in place to reward these additional skills.
Graham happily informed the committee that despite the initial fears of the Ophthalmology Department being overwhelmed with the introduction of the new NICE guidelines, the department is coping just fine.
Area Reports

St Helens
Bob Wilkes is keeping his role at the PCT. Andrew Dagnall has been in contact with the PCT regarding a possible Glaucoma Referral Refinement Scheme and says he has received positive feedback. The PCT have indicated that any participants would have to have additional College of Optometrist qualifications in order to be included. It was therefore decided that a newsletter be sent out to St Helens practices to gauge the level of interest in a Diploma in Glaucoma from the College in order to take the scheme further.

Halton
Netcare is back online at Halton Hospital for cataract surgery.

Warrington
Finlay Rosenburgh is concerned that the DRSS reminders are being sent over 2 months early. Patients naturally want their screening and GOS sight tests done at the same visit, yet GOS forms cannot be submitted 2 months early for no other reason than a DRSS error.

Any Other Business
Sally has heard from an RNIB Access Technology representative wants to come to the LOC to give a presentation on his work and wares. Sally has suggested that he first contact the LVA Department at Warrington Hospital as a better alternative. Bob mentioned that a talk from Guide Dogs for the Blind may be useful.

Graham is involved in the ‘UK Vision Strategy’ and is in contact with social services on this matter. Graham asked for a volunteer to accompany him to the next meeting and Sally agreed.

Graham has been asked to head up a task-force to replace the failing LVA service at St Helens Hospital since they are currently using an outside company. Graham is not interested in this role. Bob informs us he is also working on a plan for the LVA Dept, but it is in its early stages.

Ian White met the head of LOCSU, Georgina Gordon, at Optrafair in April and received negative feedback that Central Mersey LOC had not been as responsive to her correspondence over recent months as some other LOC’s around the country. Sally and Finlay refuted this by saying they had both had recent communications with Georgina and always gave prompt and thorough attention to her requests. Ian suggested that we could invite her to a future meeting so that she could witness our committee for herself.

Next Meeting
Tuesday 15th September
Coterie, Widnes, 6pm for 6.15 start.