



THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF OPHTHALMOLOGISTS' **PRESS RELEASE**

The importance of certifying patients is highlighted by The Royal College of Ophthalmologists and RNIB

The Royal College of Ophthalmologists is launching an initiative jointly with RNIB to highlight the importance of eye doctors and their teams working proactively with patients to certify them as sight impaired (partially sighted) or severely sight impaired (blind) using The Certificate of Visual Impairment (CVI).

The purpose of the CVI is to provide a reliable route for individuals with sight loss to be brought to the attention of social care.

Certification of vision impairment is completed by a senior eye specialist – usually a Consultant Ophthalmologist. Registration, which is a voluntary choice, is provided by Social Service Departments (SSDs).

Patients value the certification and registration process as the gateway to welfare benefits such as, in some instances, personal income tax allowance, Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance.

As part of the move to highlight the importance of certification to members, who represent over 90% of the UK's senior eye doctors, the Royal College of Ophthalmologists is working alongside RNIB and Vision 2020 UK to mount a series of CVI training sessions. These start in September (2013) – initially across nine English regions - for hospital ophthalmology teams.

Consultants and their teams will be invited to attend the training sessions, which are organised by the College and sponsored by RNIB.

The workshops will typically include presentations such as the sight loss pathway; the impact of sight loss from the patient's viewpoint; information about the CVI itself; and the epidemiology of sight loss. It is hoped that presentations about the role of the ECLO, social care and the voluntary sector will be provided by local organisations.

Future work on the project, supported by Vision 2020 UK group members, will include the provision of an online information portal for doctors and their teams to quickly access professional-use and patient information leaflets about CVI.

Harjinder Dua, President of The Royal College of Ophthalmologists, says:

"Consultant ophthalmologists have always had a responsibility to ensure that Certification is offered to appropriate patients in order that the next stage – assessment of need with local councils - can happen and people with sight loss can access social services, emotional and practical support. Now, as the Public Health Indicator used to commission clinical services is linked to Certification data, it is more important than ever that ophthalmologist do all they can to have this conversation with their patients.

"A recent survey of members shows that ophthalmologists are aware of the need to do this work but are overstretched - they need more support from ECLOs and other team members.

"The College is working with other Vision 2020 UK group members to give ophthalmologists new information tools that they need to pass onto their patients about the value of Certification and Registration. Irrespective of whether our patients decide to move from Certification to Registration or not, as clinicians we need Certification data to be as accurate as possible, to inform future eye health services and to help us all give our patients the best possible outcome.

"Accuracy and completeness of Certification of Visual Impairment (CVI) data will ensure that the Public Health Indicator is accurate and, in turn, will provide the information needed by the Government to apply adequate resources to address visual impairment."

David Allen, Head of Sight loss Prevention, RNIB said: "When the certification and registration process is successfully followed, patients access vital support within weeks and the help they then receive can substantially improve their lives.

"RNIB is committed to preventing sight loss and supporting blind and partially sighted people to live more independently so welcomes this

opportunity to work with the Royal College of Ophthalmologists and VISION 2020 UK on this project."

Anita Lightstone, Interim Chief Operations Officer for VISION 2020 UK and Programme Director for UK Vision Strategy said: "We are delighted to be working with the Royal College of Ophthalmologists and RNIB to raise awareness amongst ophthalmologists and their teams about the benefits of certification for patients.

"It is vital that ophthalmologists and their teams feel confident in approaching patients about certification. It can be a difficult conversation to have but one which can transform the lives of many patients as it gives them access to vital support enabling them to remain independent for longer".

For more information, please see <http://www.rcophth.ac.uk/CVI> ends

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