

Glaucoma awareness week 6 – 12 June

News release

2 June 2005

## SUCCESSFUL START FOR GLAUCOMA SCREENING SERVICE

The first patients to use a new glaucoma community screening service set up jointly between Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the Greater Peterborough Primary Care Partnership have hailed the scheme a success.

Since February 2005 three optometrist practices have been screening patients on their premises, saving them a visit to the hospital. Fifty patients were seen in the first few months and some of their comments were that the scheme offers faster appointment times, shorter waiting times and easier parking.

Mr Stephen Vardy, consultant ophthalmologist at the hospital trust, said: "Receiving this Department of Health funding has allowed us to set up a training programme to offer community based care to glaucoma patients. This will mean patients having to visit the hospital less.

"The eye department at the hospital has already gained enormous experience of collaboration with optometrists for our cataract and diabetic retinopathy services. With the latest funding we have been able to extend this to include glaucoma community care."

Glaucoma represents approximately 20 per cent of the total workload attending UK eye departments, and with life expectancy increasing every year it is anticipated that glaucoma will account for one third of the workload by 2020.

Keshma Rughani, optometrist at Specsavers said: "Getting involved in the glaucoma screening service has helped me to broaden my own knowledge and experience.

"The ophthalmic consultants at the hospital have been very supportive and always able to give advice. My patients have also been very positive about the scheme. They have commented that they feel relaxed and have the time to ask questions during their appointments and I in turn have the time to reassure them about the treatment of glaucoma."

Ends

### **Notes for editors**

1. Currently, three optometrist practices and four optometrists are taking part in the scheme. These are:

**Stamford:** Christine Pirrie Opticians: Christine Pirrie and Nancy Guttridge-Smith.

**Peterborough:** Specsavers: Keshma Rughani.

**Whittlesey:** Whitehead Opticians: Robert Whitehead.

They were chosen following research into the areas that patients come from.

2. The optometrists have completed theoretical and practical training to become accredited and have purchased the equipment needed to treat patients. A further five practices have been invited to join the scheme. Optometrists from these practices are currently completing their comprehensive training programme. We hope they will start to see patients towards the end of June/beginning of July.
3. Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals NHS Foundation received £422,000 funding in May 2004 under the Department of Health's chronic eye disease pilot programme to set up the service. The Trust is one of only eight sites throughout the NHS selected for the chronic eye disease management programme, and one of only three to undertake a glaucoma management programme.

4. Prior to the start of the service approximately 4000 glaucoma patients attend outpatients at the Trust annually. Once the second wave of Optometrists have started seeing patients in June/July, we estimate that initially a minimum of 1,000 patients will be seen in the community, although we hope to expand and include further Optometrists.
5. Glaucoma is a group of eye diseases in which the pressure of the fluid within the eyeball is too high. Chronic simple glaucoma, the commonest form, is a major cause of blindness. If detected early, the pressures can be controlled and the damage stopped. The condition is very gradual and completely painless, and the fibres first affected are those coming from the outer part of the retina. Loss of peripheral parts of the visual field is very difficult to notice.
6. Further information on the national chronic eye disease programme can be obtained from the Department of Health's website [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)
7. Glaucoma Awareness Week is organised by the International Glaucoma Association. Visit their website at [www.iga.org.uk](http://www.iga.org.uk)

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