

It is estimated that more than half a million people suffer from the long-term eye disease, glaucoma in England and Wales - with more than 70 million people affected across the world. On the back of Glaucoma Awareness Week, Pulse takes a look at the Trust's work in this area.

Glaucoma

screening service is set for success



Sarah Westwood



We are very happy with the positive feedback we've been getting



FOLLOWING the success of previous schemes involving community optometrists, the ophthalmic department recognised that glaucoma care could be managed in a similar way to that of diabetic retinopathy.

And just as Trust consultants were thinking about developing this service, the Department of Health invited bids for chronic eye disease pilot schemes.

A successful bid was submitted and funding was given.

The glaucoma screening service was set up jointly between the Trust and Greater Peterborough Primary Care Partnership with government funding of £422,000 from the Department of Health.

Currently, three optometrist practices and four optometrists are up and running in the community, and have been seeing patients since February this year.

These are:

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

Peterborough: Specsavers: Keshma Rughani.

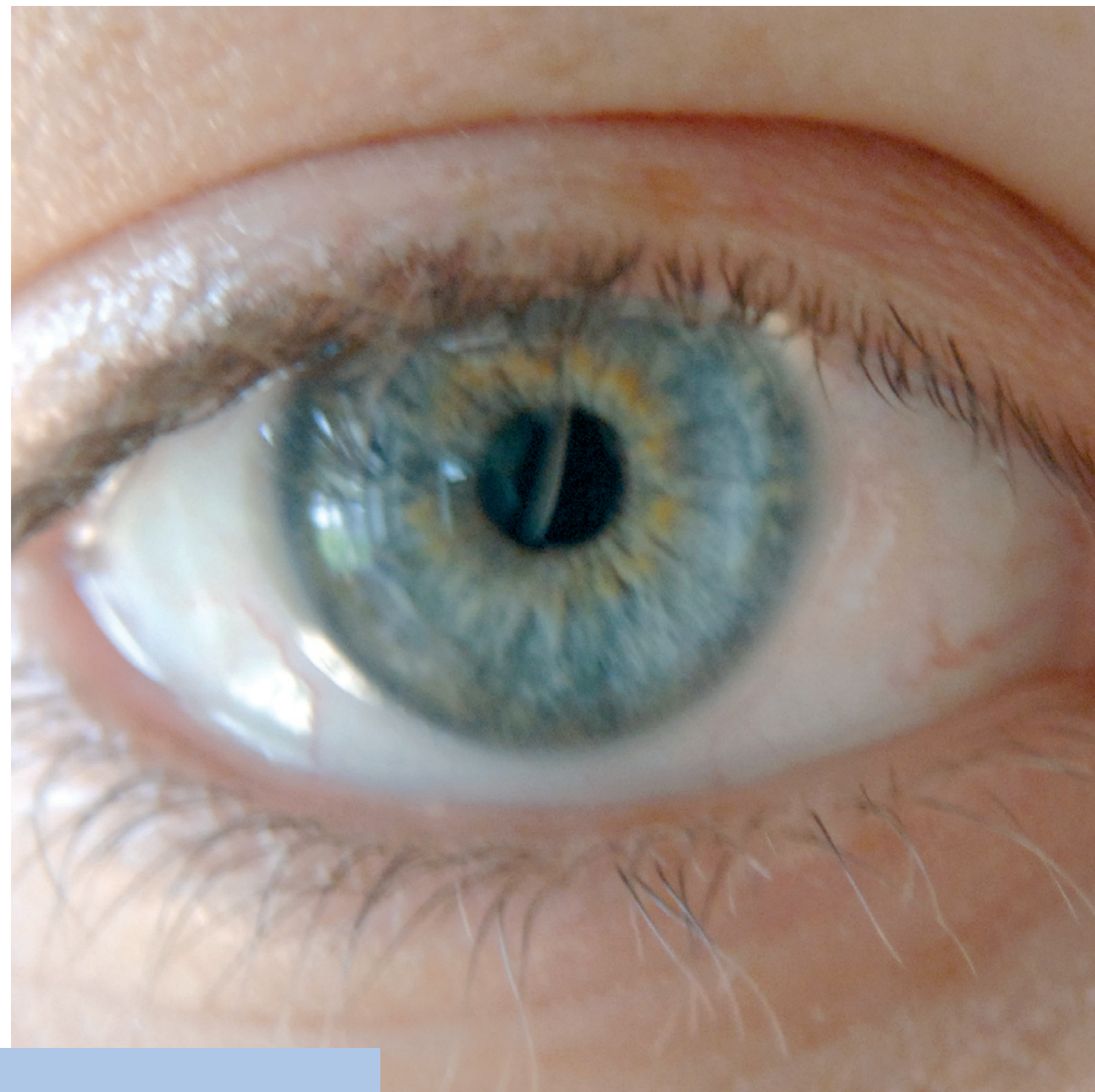
Whittlesey: Whitehead Opticians: Robert Whitehead.

Sarah Westwood, trust service improvement team project manager, said: "Glaucoma patients

Fact file

- Glaucoma mainly affects people over the age of 60.
- It is found in about two per cent of people aged over 40.
- It can also affect children and young adults.
- There are two types of glaucoma: acute and chronic.
- Untreated glaucoma can lead to blindness.
- Treatment for glaucoma is effective and useful sight can be retained.
- Routine eye test results in diagnosis of glaucoma.

account for approximately 20 per cent of the ophthalmic outpatient workload. Following research into the areas our patients come from, we have targeted optometrists practising in those areas and four more practices been invited to join the scheme.



THE OPTOMETRIST

KESHMA Rughani (pictured) at Specsavers completed her glaucoma screening training in January and has been offering the service for the past few months. She saw around 25 patients in the first two months.



The experience has been a positive one for herself and for her patients. Keshma 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 are always standing by if I need any 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."

THE CONSULTANT

TRUST consultant ophthalmologist Stephen Vardy (pictured) commented: "The eye department at Peterborough and Stamford Hospitals has already gained enormous experience in benefiting patients through our collaboration with specially trained optometrists to deal with cataract and diabetic retinopathy patients.

"Over the past 12 months and as a result of funding from the Department of Health we have further extended our collaborative efforts to include glaucoma community care.

"Glaucoma represents around 20 per cent of the total workload presenting to 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."

He added: "It is very rewarding to be able to increase our capacity and through put of patients by using specially trained optometrists and to the great benefit of the patient."



THE PATIENT

WHEN James Thornley attended a routine eye test with Keshma Rughani at Specsavers, a problem was detected with the nerve behind one eye.

James said: "I was called back for a further eye test and as a result of that I was diagnosed with glaucoma."

James is now receiving treatment on prescription for the condition and has received more detailed information about glaucoma from the hospital.

"These optometrists cover the areas of Peterborough, Bourne and Oundle and have recently completed their theory and practical training.

"This means that once they are accredited and have purchased the necessary equipment, they can start seeing patients."

Sarah added: "It is early days but 150 patients have been seen to the end of July, and we are very happy with the positive feedback we've been getting. These patients have reported benefits of faster appointment times, not being kept waiting and easier parking. We plan to run an audit on clinical outcomes and patient satisfaction once the scheme is more established.

"The early signs though are that the glaucoma screening service is going to be a great success."