

aaron's update

Newsletter Number 23

Summer 2013

Northumberland 
Care Trust
Innovation in Practice Awards



Outstanding
Optometrist
of the Year

INDEPENDENT
Prescribing
OPTOMETRISTS

Extending the Role of Community Based Eyecare

July 2013 Living North magazine featured an editorial on Aaron Optometrists. This article is also viewable on our website : www.aaronoptometrists.com

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Inside : The Full Editorial.



A Clear VISION

Spend time in Aaron Optometrists owner Peter Frampton's company and you cannot fail to be impressed by his passion for optometry and the community he serves.

After qualifying as an optometrist in Brisbane, Peter arrived in Northumberland in 1986. He joined Aarons and bought the practice in 1993, enabling him to fulfil his vision of clinical optometry. The phone number remains the only link to the humble beginnings of this now multi award-winning practice, which has been extended to cover two floors, with a team of four full time optometrists, plus twenty staff providing a 'one stop shop' for both clinical and retail optometry.

Peter is extremely proud of Aaron Optometrists, whose success he believes is due in no small part to his patients. In Peter's view, the modern marketing 'spin' seems dedicated to obscuring people's right to choice. 'We are encouraged to believe price is the only arbiter of fairness, but offering people only the cheapest product or service could, and should, be construed as devaluing the patient. It is like saying "You can only afford second best so that is all I am going to offer you"'. Peter takes his obligations to his patients very seriously. He believes professionals have no right to dictate what patients can or cannot afford, or may or may not value. As a simple courtesy, a professional's role is to ensure everyone is given the fullest choice. For example, new technology and techniques are not always available or covered by the NHS, but should that be a reason not to offer these services?

Aaron Optometrists' Ocular Coherence Tomographer (OCT) is a perfect example. Costing £50,000, it took several years to secure the finances to offer this service. Due to its cost and the absence of funding charges would be required, and Peter could have simply taken the decision not to purchase it, but felt he had no right to assume patients put so little value on their eye health. It has certainly revolutionised diagnostic capabilities. Aarons has offered retinal photography for nearly 20 years but OCT is exponentially better; this technology doesn't just see the retinal surface but within the retina, allowing the earliest detection of 'wet' macular degeneration, diabetes and many other retinal diseases. Early detection means early treatment – Peter did not feel he had a right not to offer it!

ARGUABLY THE LARGEST CHOICE OF FRAMES IN NORTHUMBERLAND

Part of the reason for extending onto two floors was to be able to ensure the availability of a 'one stop shop' for clinical and retail optometry. In the upstairs showroom you will find possibly the largest selection of frames for both adults and children in Northumberland, offering everything from free frames to the high end designer and sportswear ranges, including Tiffany, Chanel, Bvlgari, Timberland, Oakley, Mikli, Ray Ban, Prada, Gucci, Swarovski, Ted Baker, Lindberg, Miu Miu, D&G, Armani, and Maui Jim.

The huge frame choice is determined by patients; not restricted by marketing strategies. Aarons do not dictate what will be offered. The

company won't be undersold but their challenge is ensuring people know about this patient centred policy. Their extensive range of sunglasses, for instance, are all sold at VAT free prices.

HIGHER QUALIFICATIONS

Under current NHS policy, optometrists are under-funded for their clinical time and must subsidise this by selling spectacles; commercial imperatives potentially driving the market rather than clinical care and choice. Peter is concerned that his profession must not allow its clinical relevance to be masked by its over-represented commercial image. As primary health care practitioners, their clinical role is essential for a community led ocular health service and this has to be recognised by patients, optometrists and the general health care establishment.

Peter is committed to changing these commercial perceptions and the autonomy of being an independent allows him to supply any service, technique or product he feels will help extend the role of community ocular and health care. He once brought a specialist from Moorfields Eye Hospital to the practice for a one-to-one training day.

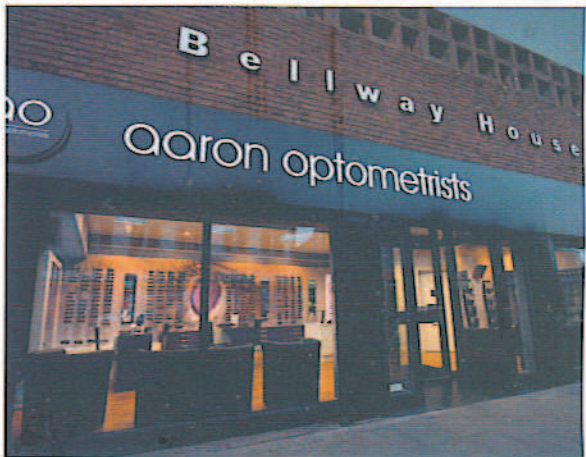
'In the upstairs showroom you will find possibly the largest selection of frames for both adults and children in Northumberland, offering everything from free frames to the high end designer and sportswear ranges.'

The most significant change to the way optometrists can practice came in 2009, with Independent Prescriber status. An Independent Prescribing Optometrist can prescribe any licensed medicine for ocular conditions. Peter is very proud to have been one of the first 30 optometrists in Britain to achieve this qualification; it remains a very select group. Unfortunately commissioning groups have not, as yet, considered a budget for the service and so those who offer it are forced to charge privately. Lack of funding, however, must not stop a profession striving for improvements. Some might say, 'Why go through a tough, time-consuming and expensive process which will not necessarily be remunerated?' Peter simply can't agree with this sentiment. Regardless of financial difficulties, patients should be allowed choice.

IP status is particularly relevant for contact lens patients; while extremely unlikely, these medical devices can carry risk, and non-IP optometrists are not allowed the tools to resolve those rare episodes. The most important purchase item with the full clinical contact lens service at Aarons is access to care. A professional member of staff is always on site during opening times. With access to IP optometrists, anyone presenting as an emergency will be seen and prompt treatment instigated.

Even before Independent Prescribing became a reality, Peter completed his Masters Degree in Ocular Therapeutics at Bradford University, achieving an MSc with Distinction. Since then he has attained Additional Supply and Supplementary Prescribing qualifications, the first stepping stones of the optometry profession toward a medical status.

Peter's reputation within the profession led him to become an honorary lecturer at Manchester University, with Aarons as an associate practice for their elite 'Masters of Optometry' programme – one of only four clinical centres involved nationwide. Peter also enjoys regular invitations to lecture nationally at prestigious events, co-authored and co-presents the two day 'Red Eye' seminar at Johnson and Johnson Vision Care Institute and presents for new intakes of qualified optometrists wishing to pursue Therapeutic Prescribing at Glasgow Caledonia





University. Peter is not one to rest on his laurels; furthering his own educational goals, he is currently doing his doctoral research into glaucoma at Aston University.

A MULTI AWARDWINNING PRACTICE

Peter has put his passion for making a positive difference to people's lives at the very core of his business. In recognition of this, he received his first award from the Northumberland Care Trust in 2003 for 'Innovation in Practice – Pushing the Boundaries' thanks to Aarons' Patient Transport service for less mobile patients.

'He strives to give his patients the tools and information to make informed decisions about their choice of care and products, and would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their continued support'

The idea for this service was borne from the frustration of not being able to access all of their routine equipment in a patient's home. So to make it as easy as possible for as many patients as possible to attend a fully equipped optometry practice, they introduced a dedicated patient transport vehicle. Despite not being funded by the NHS, Aarons supply this service free of charge.

Peter and Aarons won 'Optometrist of the Year', being the very first individual and practice to be awarded this honour. At the same ceremony they won Technology Practice of the Year – reflecting their investment in clinical technology to aid in the diagnosis, monitoring and treatment of eye conditions. In an unprecedented move, Aarons has won not one but two Care Trust awards. Their second 'Innovation

in Practice' award was for demonstrating excellence in the manner in which services are provided. The most recent accolade was to be made a 'Fellow' of the College of Optometry in 2011. A Fellowship is the highest honour awarded by the college and the award citation reads: 'In recognition of his commitment to clinical excellence. To be acknowledged by your peers is a great honour, and Peter is delighted.

INVESTING IN PEOPLE

Above all, Peter believes in investing in people – in his staff, his patients and also the wider community. The entire team is vital to ensuring a patient's clinical and vocational needs are met. Committing to co-workers by supporting and encouraging advanced clinical and professional skills ensures long term loyalty of highly qualified, motivated and committed co-professionals, and an exemplary patient experience, Peter believes.

He strives to give his patients the tools and information to make informed decisions about their choice of care and products, and would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their continued support. Aarons thrives by word of mouth – the best advert there is. Perhaps it is time Ashington let its well-kept secret out of the bag!

If you would like to find out more, then check out Aaron Optometrists' website showcasing the practice and its staff. You can also view a representative selection of the many frames they have on offer; and find the many clinical and advisory leaflets written by Peter. Why not visit the website or call into the practice...you are sure to be surprised!

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