

The **ROYAL COLLEGE** *of*
OPHTHALMOLOGISTS

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Annual Report 2021

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From the President



Bernard YP Chang
President

This calendar year will last long in our memories. It began with the UK going into a third lockdown in January 2021. The successful roll-out of the Covid vaccination programme gave us hope and we were all gearing up to the prospect of recovery of the unprecedented backlog of patients needing our eye care services. However, at the end of November, the “not again” feeling of dread returned with the spread of new Omicron variant. The year ended more brightly as this variant, though more infectious, seemed less virulent with the vaccine proving effective.

As the CEO’s message and this report will demonstrate, 2021 was an extremely busy and challenging year.

Covid presented many challenges for everyone. It has also brought into sharp relief some of the key issues facing the NHS in all four nations: under investment in the workforce, estate and technology. But, in 2021, it has also brought opportunities to consolidate relationships with key leadership figures like Sir Chris Whitty and increase his awareness of the importance of ophthalmology. Working with NHSE, ophthalmology has been under the spotlight in determining better ways of working, use of technology and, importantly, how we can overcome the backlogs.

Another major concern had been the impact of the pandemic on training. It was also becoming evident that the independent sector (IS) was playing an increasing role in NHS cataract surgery provision in England. This was because NHS eye departments, especially if not stand-alone or designated as green sites, struggled to restore elective services as the main hospital continued to look after patients with Covid.

In England, the College worked closely with Health Education England to ensure the IS recognised its part in providing surgical training

opportunities. This culminated in the publication of the Guidance for Placement of Doctors in Training in the independent sector with the expectation that all providers of NHS care offer training.

Following a survey amongst clinical leads, the College was able to start to highlight to NHSE/I that many units, due to chronic underinvestment in estate, were unable to deliver the high volume surgery needed for recovery of elective surgery. The College also raised early issues about the unwanted consequences of continued use of the IS. With the help of Regional Representatives on Council, for the first time we released a position statement on the role of the independent sector in NHS cataract services. We called for surgical training in the Independent sector to be rapidly increased, a level playing field for cataract providers to ensure equitable patient access, and for stability for the whole service, with patient safety and standards of service delivery safeguarded and underpinned by audit. As part of this, we were able to advise on the drafting of a new national NHS cataract specification, setting the expected standards to be achieved by all providers.

Early on in 2021, the White Paper, Integration and Innovation set out to create integrated care systems to improve collaboration, partnership and integration amongst providers. It remained unclear what investment would be available to create the Integrated Care Systems and all the while the demand for healthcare and the backlog has increased. The National Eye Care Recovery & Transformation Programme was gathering strength, with College Officers (myself, Declan Flanagan (VP), Bill Newman Chair of Professional Support and Fiona Spencer, Chair of Training) met regularly with the new Director John Ashcroft and Mel Hingorani as Clinical Lead for the NECRTP.



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During the course of the year, there was business as usual. The Training Committee via its Curriculum Subcommittee continued to work on the new curriculum. The Examinations Department went from strength to strength, running successful exams with Part 1 and Written Part 2 being online and proctored which has led to increased uptake especially from overseas. New overseas centres in Trinidad and Tobago, India and Egypt were agreed. The Scientific Department ran a successful virtual Congress which was vital for our financial stability. We appointed joint Honorary Secretaries, an important first for the College that may encourage more applicants for College roles in the future.

All the College Chairs, Officers, staff and members and fellows involved in College activities are to be congratulated and I thank them for their perseverance and hard work done on behalf of the College. This year we said farewell and heartfelt thanks to Mohit Gupta, (succeeded by Manoj Parulekar and Mel Hingorani as joint Honorary Secretaries) and to Melanie Corbett (succeeded by Rebecca Ford as Chair of Education).

I sincerely hope 2022 will see a return of life before the pandemic and a more optimistic view on the recovery of eye services, as we continue our work to raise the profile of ophthalmology and its importance to the millions of patients we care for.

I conclude by encouraging you all to consider roles within the College. We are only successful with your support.

Thank you and keep well.

Bernard YP Chang

President



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From the Chief Executive



Kathy Evans
Chief Executive

This report looks at College life over the 12 months to 31 December 2021. Not everything fits in neatly to that time span; events and decisions made before January 2021 affected the year in question just as 2021 experiences will have an impact on years to come.

A prime example is Covid-19, which continued to exert its influence. We had demonstrated adaptability in 2020 and in 2021 our approach to hybrid working enabled us to respond to the various phases of lockdowns whilst still serving our members. The Covid-19 Action Group expanded, became the Covid-19 Recovery Group, the intensity of meetings gradually lessened to twice a month (down from daily in May 2020) and the focus moved to guidance on prioritisation and on restoration of services.

www.rcophth.ac.uk/about/rcophth-covid-19-response/rcophth-guidance-on-restoring-ophthalmology-services/

Similarly, the National Ophthalmology Comms Group, which helped the College keep in touch with the Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) team and clinical leads across the country to understand regional difficulties, also adapted to changing circumstances. It was formed in May 2020, initially meeting twice weekly, then met on a monthly basis and has now run its course.

In September 2020, the RCOphth engaged Lucy Devine to conduct a review into the College's governance and structure and her recommendations were presented at a Strategy Day in January 2021. We set up eight working groups to develop the recommendations, successfully embedding most of them during 2021. We ended the year

having completed an extensive stock-take of College activities (the snappily entitled Review of Essential and Nice-to-have activities) and improving the processes around the operational plan. We rolled the responsibilities of the Finance Committee into the Executive Committee which has given the review of risk and its mitigation greater prominence, we have identified ways of improving communication with, and support of, the Academic Subcommittee and we have a clear plan for the development of overseas examinations, which will doubtless feature in next year's Annual Report.

However, there is still work to do on the College's role on the international stage and we have started but not finished the Cultural Review.

Please read the Annual Report, as it reflects the key activities of College departments and committees but here I would like to mention:

- We created the RCOphth Subcommittee in Wales and Andy Pyott submitted his review of ophthalmic services in Wales to the Welsh Government
- In July 2021, together with the College of Optometrists, we launched [a new joint vision for delivering eye care services across the UK](#) to encourage ambitious, co-ordinated and collaborative eye care services across the whole sector, at pace, to provide equitable access for all patients



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- The first RCOphth Clinical Fellow, Alex Chiu, appointed under the National Medical Director's Clinical Fellow Scheme, completed his year in July 2021 and was succeeded by Vishal Shah. They were appointed in the face of stiff competition (with a 9:1 applicant to post ratio) and have both proved to be great assets

And we give attention to all the day-to-day activities that keep the RCOphth a thriving organisation as we:

- Regularly communicate with members via Eye Mail and College News
- Support CESR and Dual Sponsorship Applicants
- Support Advisory Appointment Committees
- Act as a nominating body for Clinical Excellence Awards
- Carry out HR and finance functions, maintain the premises and develop our IT infrastructure

It has been another challenging year and, whatever the bumps on the road, the dedication of staff, clinicians and lay advisers associated with the College has been extraordinary.

Kathy Evans

Chief Executive



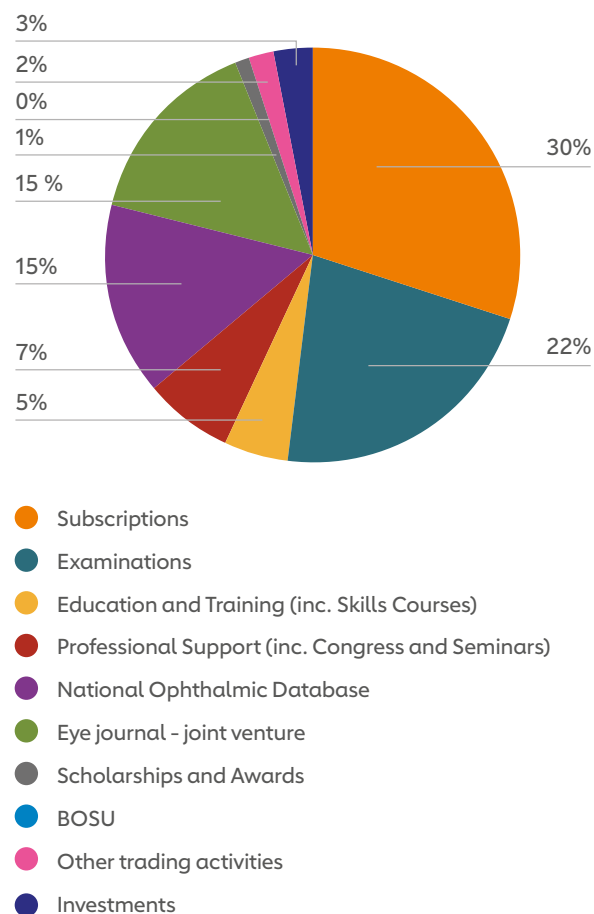
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Income 2021

	2021 £'000s	2020 £'000s
Subscriptions	1,531	1,466
Examinations	1,127	553
Educations and Training (inc. Skills Courses)	277	199
Professional Support (inc. Congress and Seminars)	346	111
National Ophthalmic Database	773	339
Eye journal - joint venture	774	748
Scholarships and Awards	68	28
BOSU	17	29
Other trading activities	100	108
Investments	124	131
Total income	5,137	3,712



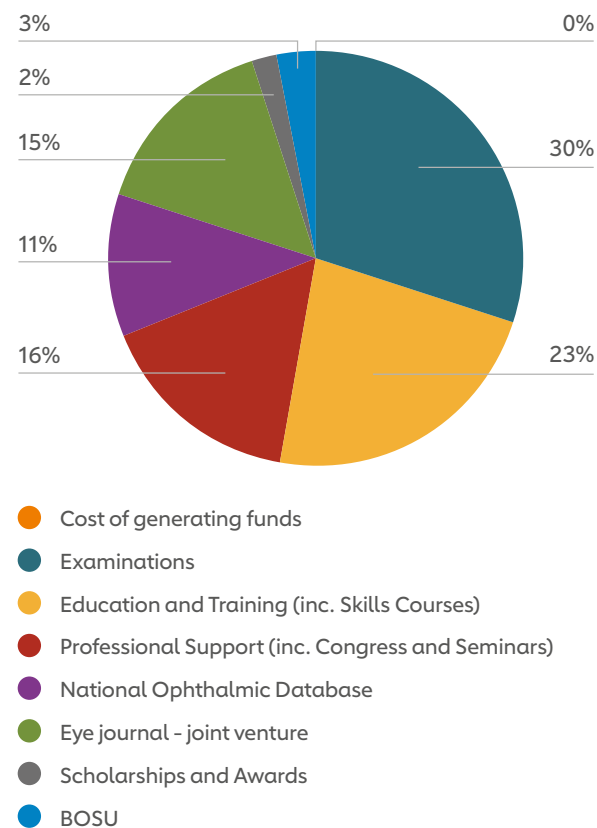
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Statement of financial
activities for the year ended
31 December 2021

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Expenditure 2021

	2021 £'000s	2020 £'000s
Cost of generating funds	-	-
Examinations	1,432	1,110
Education and Training (inc. Skills Courses)	1,110	948
Professional Support (inc. Congress and Seminars)	767	1,001
National Ophthalmic Database	496	377
Eye journal - joint venture	691	668
Scholarships and Awards	111	40
BOSU	143	114
Total expenditure	4,750	4,258
Gains on investment	195	191
Net movement in funds	582	(355)
Funds brought forward	12,562	12,917
Funds carried forward	13,144	12,562



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