

RCOphth Medical Student Ophthalmology Societies' meeting

The inaugural RCOphth Medical Student Ophthalmology Societies' meeting on Monday 20 June was led by Dr Michael Williams (Queen's University, Belfast) and Ms Teresa Sandinha (University of Liverpool). It was held online, with accessibility in mind for geographically distant students. Nine university ophthalmology societies each gave 20 minute long presentations, specifically Barts, Birmingham, Kings, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, UCL and UEA, and the Medical Students Ophthalmology Society of Ireland, supported by the Irish College of Ophthalmologists. The University of Birmingham Ophthalmology Society team was awarded best presentation.

Most societies described their activities, which collectively included evening meetings, practice OSCEs with feedback, imaginative microsurgical skills sessions held in person and remotely, innovative and interactive *de novo* online revision materials, and podcasts, formal linking with trainees for research projects, charity work such as collecting old glasses, and a bike ride, an Eye Ball, public engagement through social media campaigns, school talks and infographics, ophthalmology taster days, and sessions on building CVs. That students devised, organised and delivered such a range and number of events is testament to their energy, imagination, and sheer abilities, and bodes well for the coming decades!

There were three guest speakers. RCOphth President Bernie Chang gave the welcome address. Dr. Sunil Mamtora from the OTG gave a practical supportive talk on 'How to get into Ophthalmology'. The keynote address was given by Professor Andrew Dick (Professor of Ophthalmology, Bristol Medical School, and Director of UCL Institute of Ophthalmology) on the topic of "Endophenotype and precision medicine for immune mediated ocular disorders.". Prof Dick described the journey to identify the role of anti-TNF for uveitis, and the concept of understanding clinical phenotypes at a molecular level.

There were over 40 student delegates, who gave overwhelmingly positive feedback. They enjoyed meeting each other, even online, and getting ideas from others. The meeting is also an opportunity for connections to form, by region, or in sharing online materials for example. The challenge as with any online meeting is to build a social space for informal interaction. An interesting anecdotal theme from the meeting was students' perception of insufficient curricular time for ophthalmology in their courses; perhaps confirming many member's impressions too. How we as a College can address this issue is something to be considered going forward.

This will be an annual event. The British Undergraduate Ophthalmology Society was cited by some, and has good online resources, but historically its activity levels have depended on enthusiastic individuals maintaining momentum, and presently seems inactive. Hopefully the College will continue to be a constant presence to support the students. After all, they are our potential future members.

Michael Williams