



Confederation of Greater Manchester LOCs

To: All optical contractors and performers in Greater Manchester

October 2014

Avoid misleading literature and thus avoid the GOC

I have been contacted by Public Health England in Greater Manchester who support NHSE in the commissioning of all screening programmes, including diabetic retinopathy. They are aware of a small number of practices, primarily in areas where they are not involved in DR screening, who are advertising fundus photography to patients in a way that might suggest it is screening or a substitute. They are concerned that this might confuse a patient who may believe that they do not need to attend the NHS screening service if they have been seen in the practice and, to some extent, vice versa.

I draw your attention to advice from both AOP and the College which warns against this. The AOP point out that with the advent of the universally available national programme, the word screening in connection with diabetic retinopathy carries a number of connotations. It implies quality control via secondary grading, by the use of qualified grading staff and by the continual monitoring of those graders by means of online tests. Therefore a fundus photograph and sight test should not be referred to as screening in any way. Eye health check is a suggested phrase, with no suggestion at all that this is special in any way for someone with diabetes.

This same problem arose in another area of the country and the screening service simply complained to the GOC. Whilst it did not progress to a full hearing, the practitioner still suffered months of uncertainty and the Investigating Committee would not let go until they were satisfied that the practice literature had been revised.

There are plenty of good reasons for a patient with diabetes to have fundus photographs at a sight test that have nothing to do with retinopathy; maintaining a record of disc appearance for future comparison when checking for glaucoma is an obvious one. Concentrate on those benefits in any patient literature and not the retinopathy which is well covered by the screening programmes. At the same time you should be encouraging patients to attend the screening programme when recalled. This will avoid any complaints and unpleasantness.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Warburton
Chairman

GM Confederation of LOCs

Greater Manchester Local Optical Committees

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