

North of England Ophthalmology Society Report

A fresh bright day welcomed delegates arriving at the North of England Ophthalmology Society (NEOS) spring meeting. The convener for the morning session on cataract surgery was Nigel James, Corneal Consultant at Bradford Royal Infirmary, who introduced the morning's speakers for the session on 'Cataract surgery: what would you do?'

James Ball, Corneal Consultant, at St James's University Hospital gave an excellent overview on cataract surgery and astigmatism. He described the benefits of on-axis phacoemulsification surgery, and the use of toric intraocular lenses (IOLs) in patients with high astigmatism, as well as emphasising the importance of optimally managing patients unhappy with their refractive outcome. He advised the referral of such patients to a regional unit offering a refractive laser service.

This was then followed by Nigel James' informative lecture on the challenges of cataract surgery in Fuch's endothelial dystrophy, which included advice on the appropriate timing of phacoemulsification surgery alone versus a triple procedure. He gave valuable advice on how to protect the endothelium in such patients, encouraging a soft shell approach, the use of a Kelman tip and avoiding chlorhexidine prep.

Norman Litvin gave the next presentation on cataract surgery in the presence of glaucoma. His take home message highlighted the value of an individualised approach to the glaucoma patient undergoing cataract surgery. Phacoemulsification alone may stabilise intraocular pressure (IOP) control in mild progressive open angle glaucoma (POAG) and pseudoexfoliation patients, but a combined phaco and augmented trabeculectomy was appropriate in patients with cataract and moderate to severely uncontrolled intraocular pressures. Additionally, he imparted some useful tips on managing the small pupil, including the use of the Beehler dilator.

Helen Devonport gave an excellent and comprehensive summary of cataract surgery in uveitits. She reiterated the importance of careful perioperative evaluation and management. She also stressed the importance of achieving a quiet eye prior to cataract surgery and offered some useful surgical pearls regarding the choice of IOL material. She advised caution in reducing the steroids too soon after surgery.

Faruque Ghanchi took delegates through challenges of cataract surgery in diabetic patients. He described the greater propensity

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Delegates at NEOS Meeting.



Prof MacLaren receiving PJ Hay medal from NEOS President Soonu Verghese.

of diabetic retinopathy to progress following phacoemulsification. He also encouraged delivering intravitreal triamcinolone in the appropriate patient with clinically significant macular oedema, and indirect pan-retinal photocoagulation at the time of cataract surgery in the presence of active proliferative disease.

This part of the day concluded with an entertaining and informative talk from Izzy Mahomed on the importance of careful history taking, informed consent and expectation management when planning cataract surgery in age-related macular degeneration.

The free paper session was chaired by Steve Charles, who commented on the high quality of this year's presentations. Congratulations to the two winners: Mr Muqit on an engaging talk on spatial and spectral imaging of laser photocoagulation burns and Miss Cehajic-Kapetanovic, who delivered a

fascinating presentation on enhancing ocular gene therapy using glycosidic enzymes.

After lunch, Mr Soonu Verghese paid tribute to the outgoing president Brian Hercules after which the PJ Hay Essay Prize was awarded to Miss Kanchan Bhan, who presented a detailed insight from her winning essay on multisource learning in surgery. She described how multisource feedback fits well into educational perspectives and the increasing demands of ophthalmic surgical training, giving examples from her own journey to becoming an independent surgeon.

John Bradbury chaired the afternoon session, on genetics and ophthalmology. He introduced the first afternoon speaker, Prof of Molecular Ophthalmology, Chris Inglehearn who gave a fascinating overview of the genetics of glaucoma, detailing the main known candidate genes implicated in POAG, including the myocilin gene. He suggested a complex interaction between genetic and environmental factors and advised the audience to look for replication of studies on causative genes before drawing conclusions.

Carmel Toomes, Royal Society Principal Research Fellow, explained why the eye provides an ideal model for the study of genetic disease, and in particular for mapping the pathways of angiogenesis. She provided an enlightening insight of her 10 years experience into familial exudative vitreoretinopathy.

Martin McKibben's entertaining and instructive approach to the practical aspects of clinical diagnostic testing detailed resources including the Genetics Reference Laboratory in Manchester, which describes the genetic tests offered in the North of England.

Finally, the Percival J Hay lecturer Prof Robert MacLaren provided an illuminating address on future gene and stem cell therapy for retinal disease. He described the future of stem cell therapy as being able to make a cell clone using DNA from a patient's own cell, differentiating the cells *in vitro* to photoreceptor precursor cells and transplanting the cells into the retina to restore vision. An enjoyable and educational meeting was concluded with the presentation of the PJ Hay Medal to Prof MacLaren. ●

The Summer NEOS meeting on Cornea and Oculoplastics will be held on 15th June, 2011 in Preston.