

The World Council of Optometry
Meeting of the General Delegates
to be held 5 June 2009

Netherlands Country Report

Optometristen Vereniging Nederland (Dutch Optometric Association)

Introduction

The Dutch Association of Optometrists (OVN) was originally established in June 1961 but was restructured in March 2000 as a result of the new legislative status of the profession. The mission of the association is to promote the practice of optometry by qualified optometrists and to serve the individual and collective interests of its members.

The title of optometrist is since 15 November 2000 legally restricted to qualified practitioners. Optometrists are allowed to use diagnostic drugs during eye examinations. The OVN has currently 704 members and 86 student members. 75% practises in optical stores, 20% practises in a clinical setting and 5% is employed elsewhere (s.a. in industry or education).

Priorities

To achieve the mission the OVN council has recently determined a strategy for the next three years consisting of three priorities:

1. Enhance the profile of the optometrist by increasing PR activities
2. Achieve remuneration for optometric services
3. Establish a network of regional groups of optometrists

Profile and PR

Optometry in The Netherlands is still not very well-known, neither the public nor the other health care professionals are really aware of its existence, this with exception for the ophthalmologists and orthoptists. In 2008 we organised the Sight Week and developed to that purpose a magazine for the public that our members can distribute with detailed information about optometry in general, about their practice, services and the products they offer.

Achieve remuneration for optometric services

Optometry is legislated in the Netherlands since November 2000. The optometrist is increasingly involved in eye care. However, health care insurance does not reimburse those services. The patient has to pay for them himself while an examination by a GP or an ophthalmologist is reimbursed by the health care insurance companies. Several studies have demonstrated that co-operation with optometrists is highly cost-effective. Now is the

time to convince the health care insurance companies that optometrists can contribute considerably to the Dutch eye care system and must be rewarded for the services they provide.

Establish a network of regional groups of optometrists

Optometrists organized in a network can achieve more than individual optometrists. Together they stand stronger in profiling optometry and to develop good relationships with GPs, ophthalmologists and other health care professionals. Participation is not without engagement. The OVN provides information and documents to start up a group of optometrists and will support the regional groups in their activities to establish a national network. Earlier this year OVN appointed Dr Annemieke Coops, BOptom, PhD to coordinate the CET and regional activities.

Continuing Education and Training

Dutch optometrists can voluntarily join the quality register for paramedics. Registered optometrists are required to maintain a portfolio containing the CET-points and work experience over a period of five years. Assessment of the portfolio for re-registration takes place every five years. This year the Dutch Association of Optometrists organised for the first time a prestigious 2-day conference with scientific lectures and workshops. National and international speakers made this meeting with more than 400 participants a great success.

President

In April 2009 after a period of 9 years Rob Gevers retired as president of the association. During these years he did a great job for the association and the profession, developing the optometrist from a new profession to a fully-grown eye care professional. He is succeeded by Dr Anton Verezen, BOptom, PhD, FAAO.