

Guidance for Optometrists wishing to training as slit lamp screeners in a diabetic eye screening programme

Introduction

The NHS Diabetic Eye Screening Programme (NDESP) aims to reduce the risk of sight loss among people with diabetes by the early detection and treatment, if needed, of diabetic retinopathy. Screening using 2 field digital photography of each eye is offered every year to all eligible people with diabetes aged 12 and over. The UK National Screening Committee and NHS Screening Programmes are part of Public Health England (PHE), an executive agency of the Department of Health.

Why do some people need slit lamp screening?

If digital photography is unsuccessful the patient is recalled for screening using slit lamp biomicroscopy (SLB) and volk lens. The reasons why patients may have unsuccessful digital photography screening are varied but reduced clarity of ocular media e.g. cataract is the largest contributor.

How do I train as a slit lamp screener?

You must be a qualified practicing optometrist registered with the general optical council (GOC) and you must meet the following training and accreditation guidelines:

- Pass the 'Detect retinopathy and classify diabetic retinopathy unit' of the Diploma for health screeners. (unit 21) Or
- optometrists that have completed unit 7, Detecting retinal disease and unit 8, 'Classifying diabetic retinopathy' in the previous City and Guilds qualification are exempt from taking additional units if undertaking SLB only
- Undertake and pass a level I sign off clinic and can demonstrate competence in SLB examination technique in the opinion of the assessor across SLB assessments on 10 patients with various stages of diabetic retinopathy and related common retinal disorders.
- Following a period of training and clinical placement in hospital eye service (HES) undertake and pass a level II sign off clinic comprising a of formal assessment of 10 patients with varying stages of diabetic retinopathy and related common retinal disorders.

How long will this take?

The use of slit lamp and volk lens to examine the fundus is a core competency for optometrists and if you are using a slit lamp and volk lens routinely in practice you should be capable of undertaking the level I sign clinic without any additional training. We will organise the opportunity for you to attend diabetic clinics in HES and we ask that you keep a log book to record patients that you have examined. At a minimum, we ask that you complete a logbook entry for 40 patients with varying degrees of diabetic retinopathy. During this period of clinical placement, you will be under the supervision of a consultant ophthalmologist who will act as your tutor and assessor. They will determine your readiness to take the final Level II sign off clinic. The time taken to complete this process will vary and be dependent on how much time you spend in HES and your own clinical skills.