



Optometry Wales

Out Of Hours Service by Optometrists.

Eye emergencies currently cause a lot of unscheduled care in the Secondary Care system. Many eye emergencies which call out an Out of Hours GP are referred to the Eye Casualty which is often in an Eye Ward of the hospital.

Currently Eye Outpatient Departments are open from 9.00-1.00 and 2.00- 4.30 (although this may vary within each health board) and any eye emergencies require an on call Ophthalmologist to be called out to deal with what are sometimes relatively simple problems.

Optometrists are well placed to offer an Out of Hours service, although ideally this enhanced service should not be offered within their own practices but rather a triaging service within either a local community clinic or and A and E department with the required equipment to examine eye casualties. The Wales Eye Care Service (WECS) has already shown that Optometrists appropriately manage many eye problems which present themselves in the community close to the patient's home¹.

The service would require a group of Optometrists on a rota basis to provide an evening and weekend cover.

The patients would be directed to the service by:

NHS Direct Wales, Out Of Hours GPs, GPs

This would mean that the number referred directly into Secondary Care could be reduced.

Optometry Wales believe that there should be proper and appropriate remuneration for being 'on call' and do not believe that any WECS fee should be applied given the above considerations.

Revised September 2016

¹ Dr NJL Sheen, "Evaluation of the Primary Eye Acute Referral Scheme (PEARS) and the Welsh Eye Health Examination (WEHE), www.wales.nhs.uk, 2007.