



Issue No.2
December 2006

Newsletter

Voluntary Registration Launch

In April this year VRC quietly opened its doors for applications from prospective registrants. This milestone was the result of nearly 18 months hard work in preparing the appropriate paperwork for the process. The reason behind the rather low-key launch was because we were still awaiting our Certificate of Incorporation from Companies House. I am pleased to say that as of the 4th September 2006, VRC is now a registered company and we will be adopting a more high profile advertising campaign in the near future. The first meeting at which applications for registration were considered was held in October 2006.

The establishment of Voluntary Registration Council has proved to be both complex and time consuming. It is certain that without the help and financial support provided by the Department of Health (DH) and particularly Prof. Sue Hill, the formation of such a group would have been almost impossible. VRC will be continuing its relationship with DH in order to assess future groups for admission into the voluntary registration process.

VRC's aim is to prepare member healthcare science professions for formal regulation via the Health Professions Council (HPC). This is achieved by running a voluntary register for an appropriate period and then assisting in the formal application and presentation process. It is expected that other healthcare science groups will join VRC in the future.

Terry Johnson

It is important to remember that you do not have to belong to a Professional Body to apply for registration via VRC.

Application forms are available via the VRC website <http://www.vrcouncil.org/>
Or directly from

Executive Business Support Ltd
Suite 4, Sovereign House
22 Gate Lane
Boldmere
Sutton Coldfield.
B73 5TT

T: 0845 838 6267
F: 0121 355 2420
E: vrc@execbs.com
W www.vrcouncil.org

The fee for a new application is £45. To view the full list of charges please visit the website or see below.

VRC has been set up to provide a stepping-stone for healthcare science professions aspiring toward formal regulation via the Health Professions Council (HPC).

VRC is delighted to announce that following 2 years of hard work, it has now begun to accept applications for registration from the following 6 professions:

Anatomical Pathology Technologists

Cytotechnologists

Critical Care Technologists

Genetic Technologists

Diabetic Retinal Screeners

Ophthalmic Science Practitioners



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Fee	Details	Amount
Registration	Initial Application	£45.00
Incomplete Registration	Minor Omittances For example documents or cheque are unsigned	£20.00
Incomplete Registration	Major Omittances For example, the application is returned by the assessor requesting further information	£35.00
Renewal Fees		£25.00
Late Renewals		£50.00
Registration Reactivation		£50.00
Replacement Certificates		£5.00

The Regulation of the Non Medical Healthcare Professions

A review by the Department of Health
Voluntary Registration Council for Healthcare Science Response

The Department of Health has for some time now indicated its intention to extend regulation across the healthcare workforce. Drivers for this important change have come from several very important sources including the Shipman report. With this in mind it has always been apparent that significant changes to current regulation would have to be made to ensure consistency between regulators so that those being regulated and importantly the public may have clear expectations.

The desire to regulate a large proportion of the NHS workforce is bound to create logistical problems. From the VRC perspective it has been clear from the outset that the Health Professions Council alone would have great difficulty in regulating the 53 healthcare science groups. To cast its net wider without change would undoubtedly produce an almost unworkable leviathan that would perhaps have difficulty in fulfilling its primary aim of protecting the public. VRC therefore welcomes this report.

It is perhaps surprising that the report makes no mention of VRC especially when one considers that VRC was founded and initially funded by the Department of Health. It is accepted that at the time the report was compiled VRC was still engaged in developing everything needed to operate but even so it is an important oversight to ignore VRC altogether.

In general terms VRC supports the majority of the recommendations contained within the report. VRC does have concerns (as we are sure other groups do) regarding employer lead regulation and revalidation. It may be that once the Scottish Pilot scheme has finished and been adequately evaluated and reported that many of the concerns may be addressed. We must wait and see what issues it raises and then comment.

It is assumed that the current procedures for taking a profession forward to statutory regulation will remain. VRC is only too aware of how difficult and time consuming it is to prepare a profession for statutory regulation. VRC was specifically set up to undertake this process and has in place everything that is required to prepare professions for this important step forward. Although VRC has been set up provisionally to deal with healthcare science professions there is no reason why it could not be used as the vehicle for all healthcare professions seeking statutory regulation.

Terry Johnson
VRC Chair



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The Association of Ophthalmic Science Practitioners (AOSP) primary function is to unify the diverse Healthcare Science groups involved in imaging, physiological measurement and scientific and technical investigation within the field of Ophthalmology and Vision Science. Its inaugural meeting took place in Birmingham, May 2003. AOSP has been involved in three major areas of activity since its formation, firstly through the Healthcare Science Project, developing National Occupational Standards (NOS), in collaboration with Universities and HE colleges developing and commissioning educational programmes and via the Voluntary Registration Council, building the mechanisms by which statutory regulation and state registration of Ophthalmic Science Practitioners might be achieved.

One of the objectives of the Health Care Science Project was to establish National Occupational Standards (NOS). These are statements of competent performance; what a clinical practitioner should be able to do, and what they need to know and understand in order to do it. AOSP collaborated with other professions in ophthalmology in the creation 16 NOS exclusively describing skills in Ophthalmology & Vision Science (OVS). 13 of these OVS standards are used as benchmarks to assess competence for the Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Science & Technology. NOS are also being used to guide content of AOSP continuing education programmes and workshops.

Since its formation, AOSP has been involved in the development and commissioning of educational programmes to support the Ophthalmic Healthcare Science Workforce. What was common to all the groups represented by AOSP was the need for effective foundation knowledge in ophthalmology; covering the basic sciences of anatomy, physiology, optics, pharmacology and pathology affecting the eye and visual system. Examination, Ocular Imaging and Physiological Measurement Test procedure are also included within the curriculum. The course is based on the Skills for Health Foundation Degree Framework, with 35% common learning (ethics, law, diversity & professional practice) and 65% specialist knowledge and skills. The Foundation Degree in Ophthalmic Science and Technology will qualify practitioners in a broad spectrum of ophthalmic skills. Validation of a BSc programme covering specialist areas of practice is being pursued for 2007/8, covering angiographic imaging of the eye, standardised echography of the eye and orbit and electro-physiology of the visual system. The Foundation degree in Ophthalmic Science and Technology currently represents the minimum level of qualification required for admission to the Ophthalmic Science Modality of the VRC Register.



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Establishing standards of practice and educational programmes have been just two of the challenges facing the ophthalmic healthcare science workforce. Statutory regulation and state registration is another important area. Regulation of the Ophthalmology Healthcare Science Profession is essential to ensure public safety and confidence. Much of the testing performed by Ophthalmic Science Practitioners is invasive and if performed inaccurately, harmful, with serious impact on the patients' visual outcome and rehabilitation. AOSP fully supports the regulatory process and as an aspirant, healthcare science professional body, forms part of the Voluntary Registration Council. VRC is the vehicle for preparing new professions for statutory regulation with the Health Professions Council (HPC) permitting them to administrate a voluntary for a minimum of two years.

The structure of VRC mirrors that of HPC; the common code of conduct, disciplinary processes, fitness to practice and registration mechanisms have been developed by all the professional groups within VRC. AOSP is currently promoting the VRC Voluntary Register with its members and the members of the Ophthalmic Imaging Association (OIA) encouraging all members to voluntary register. Workshops have been held at conferences advising members of the responsibility of registering and the application process.

The earliest AOSP members could be regulated by HPC is 2009; in the intervening three years a dossier of evidence must be collected, demonstrating that ophthalmic health care science mirrors the standards set by HPC and the of the other healthcare professions currently regulated.

A new qualification for those working in Ophthalmic Science Practice that is genuinely fit for purpose has just been the start. National occupational standards are being used to guide curriculum content for continuing education programmes and conferences. The VRC professional code of conduct, standards of proficiency and fitness to practice mechanisms will help to ensure public confidence in ophthalmic healthcare science personnel. Patient safety is foremost in all our minds, I'm pleased to say that the educational changes and voluntary registration of process has received overwhelming support of clinicians and allied professions within the field of ophthalmology.

Christopher Mody
Acting Chair – AOSP
VRC Ophthalmology Modality Registrar