

# Networking in ophthalmology and ophthalmic imaging

Whether virtually or in real life, networking can expand our horizons. **Rosalyn Painter** takes a look at how it has influenced her own career.



(L-R) Jacqui Kenyon, Haag-Streit UK, Lisette Bijma, Oxford Eye Emergency Department Sister, Rosalyn Painter.

It is easy to forget the importance of networking, especially in the current climate; as imagers we can all too often forget that other imagers in different departments may be experiencing the same difficulties with equipment and patients. When we get together this presents a great opportunity to unburden these woes with other like-minded individuals. We have lots of options for meeting other imagers and other ophthalmic professionals, granted it is harder at the moment.

Our colleagues that work privately and for suppliers of ophthalmic devices have likely worked in similar positions and through networking have heard of opportunities to move into different positions. We can give ourselves these opportunities as well; we just need to put ourselves out there. I have found that through networking I have moved around the country several times and landed in a role I never expected to find myself in but I can think of no place I would rather be at this point in my life.

From a purely ophthalmic imaging point of view, there is the Ophthalmic Imaging Association (OIA) in the UK, the Scottish Imaging Network (SINAPSE), Scottish Ophthalmic Imaging Society (SOIS), Ophthalmic Photographers Society (OPS) in America and the International Conference of Ophthalmic Photographers (ICOP) to name just a few; a simple internet search will find societies close to home and all associations afford us learning and networking opportunities.

If you are looking for something a little more varied, there is the UK and Ireland Society of Ophthalmic Professionals (UKISOP) which is associated with the UK and Ireland Society of Corneal and Refractive Surgeons (UKISCRS) – both societies meet at the same time, in the same location, giving us the chance to learn from specialists in ophthalmology as well as from optometry, orthoptics, nursing and anyone with an interest in ophthalmology.

Optometry and orthoptics also have their own specialist meetings that are often very informative for imagers and technicians, you will be able to find lots of meetings in the *Eye News* events diary – have a look at the programmes and if something floats your boat try to find funding to attend!

Hospital charities are often willing to fund educational programs if you are unable to get funding from your department. It is often dismissed but self-funding is always an option; whilst not always an easy option, if you are passionate about something then invest in yourself and give it a go. You will find people at every meeting you go to that are friendly and interested in your experiences.

I currently sit as the President for UKISOP; it was here that I met Nurse Consultant Rebecca Turner from Oxford Eye Hospital who had enough faith in my abilities to suggest that I apply for the post of Clinical Unit Manager at the Oxford Eye Hospital. I hadn't thought about leading a nursing team until she suggested I look into it. I was an imager at Bristol Eye Hospital and the

thought of moving to Oxford was daunting, but I decided to put myself out there and apply. After lots of research and sleepless nights as well as the unwavering support of my partner, I interviewed successfully for the post, upped sticks and moved halfway across the country! Yes, it was scary to move completely away from my friends and everything that I knew to lead a team of nurses, however, I was greeted with open arms into a department that is packed with talented staff. They know my background in ophthalmic imaging and my understanding of ophthalmology and accept that I am not a nurse. My team has grown over the last few years and we have promoted members of the team and created new posts to offer variety and stability. I depend on my team to tell me the things I don't know about nursing and they look to me for leadership and management of the department.

I am lucky to have met such a wonderful team, but this would not have been possible without looking for opportunities unique to networking. I have met some of my closest friends at meetings; we are like-minded and passionate about all things ophthalmology. I would invite you to look at where you see yourself in a few years' time and see if networking can help you get there.

All societies depend heavily on the trade representatives to support meetings we hold. It is important to recognise that we are unable to do our jobs without their support, whether it is training when we get new equipment, or asking for advice when something goes wrong – picking their brains



is always a valuable experience. As well as meetings like the OIA where you will meet members of the trade and hear talks from them about how to get the best out of your equipment, they also provide teaching and networking opportunities throughout the year. Some of these events have moved online so take advantage and look up the equipment you use, see if there is an event happening near you or online and join in – you will be surprised at the things you might learn.

At the 2019 OIA meeting I was voted as Chair elect, I will take over from Colin Clements as Chair in 2021 – we will be holding a meeting, hopefully in person, in Nottingham in early November. If you went to the 2019 conference you will know what kind of thing to expect, we are working hard on making sure the program is better than ever. If you have any ideas about what you would like to see at OIA next year please do get in contact with [oiadmin@eyeimaging.org](mailto:oiadmin@eyeimaging.org) or have a look at the website [www.eyeimaging.org](http://www.eyeimaging.org) The OIA committee is staffed by volunteers who give up their own time to organise events and put on the best conference possible, we need your help to do this. All societies need input from their members, so don't be afraid to put yourself out there and offer your skills; who knows, it might be life changing!

There are events happening all the time all over the world, I have only mentioned some of the great societies I have had the pleasure of attending. I have learnt from attending events that networking isn't about what you can get out of an event but also what you can give back. When putting yourself out of your comfort zone, remember that everyone else in the room has been there, or is looking at you thinking "I couldn't do that". Conferences are meant to be fun, so get stuck in and get involved – you never know who you might meet at the next meeting you attend.

---

#### SECTION EDITOR



#### Rosalyn Painter,

Clinical Manager Oxford Eye Hospital, Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust.

**E:** [Rosalyn.Painter@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:Rosalyn.Painter@ouh.nhs.uk)

---

**Acknowledgement:** Photos taken by Jacqui Kenyon, Haag-Streit UK, at the OIA Annual Meeting 2019.

---