



26 April 2022

Dear student optometrists and student dispensing opticians,

**Re: COVID-19 vaccination**

We want to thank you for the commitment you have made to your studies and to those that delivered patient care during the pandemic. As part of a much needed profession, you all play a key role in providing the best patient care possible and whilst we know it has not been easy, the principles of putting patients' safety first and the innovation and flexibility in service you have experienced will help you for the future.

Protecting yourselves, your fellow students and colleagues from risk and harm, including those most at risk from COVID-19, is vital. Therefore, as we move to the Government's 'living with COVID-19' phase we are writing to highlight the ongoing importance of vaccination against transmissible diseases and the personal and professional responsibilities that you have under the General Optical Council's Standards for Optical Students<sup>i</sup>.

We know that many of you are already vaccinated against COVID-19. Vaccination is considered to be among the safest, most effective and evidence-based approaches to help protect populations from infectious diseases<sup>ii</sup>. The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has authorised the use of COVID-19 vaccines in the UK following a rigorous review of their safety, quality and efficacy<sup>iii</sup>. The evidence from clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines approved for UK use shows these to be safe and effective, and over ten billion doses have been given worldwide,

providing a very high degree of protection from serious illness, hospitalisation and death.

The strong recommendation therefore from the regulatory, government and professional representative bodies is that anyone in patient-facing roles should be vaccinated in line with each nation's public health advice. We encourage employers and educational institutions to support this aim by sharing the benefits of being vaccinated with their staff and students<sup>iv</sup>.

We advise that where a student or healthcare professional is not fully vaccinated because of a medical exemption or other reason, they must take particular care to follow rigorous infection prevention and control measures including ensuring self-testing in line with public health advice and not going into work or their place of study if unwell.

If you are still unsure about whether to have the primary vaccine course and/or booster, please speak to your personal tutor or your educational institution's advice services, employer, professional body or GP, or access public health advice online.

A range of videos and materials have been produced to help healthcare professionals and the public understand the benefits of vaccination for themselves and for their patients, which are available on the websites of The College of Optometrists<sup>v</sup> and the Association of British Dispensing Opticians<sup>vi</sup>. For further information about how to get your vaccine in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland please go online<sup>vii viii ix x</sup>.

We want to thank you for your continuing work to create a safe environment for patients, students and colleagues in the eye care sector.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of us for more information, or to discuss any concerns you have and we will do our best to help address these.

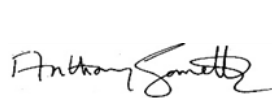
Kind regards,



**Leonie Milliner**

Chief Executive  
and Registrar

General Optical  
Council (GOC)



**Sir Anthony  
Garrett**

General Secretary  
Association of  
British Dispensing  
Opticians (ABDO)



**Simon Rodwell**

Secretary General  
The Association of  
Contact Lens  
Manufacturers Ltd  
(ACLM)



**Dr Christian  
French**

Chairman  
The Association  
for Independent  
Optometrists  
and Dispensing  
Opticians (AIO)



**Adam Sampson**

Chief Executive  
Officer  
Association of  
Optometrists  
(AOP)



**Neil Retallic**

President  
British Contact  
Lens Association  
(BCLA)



**Colin Davidson**

President  
The College of  
Optometrists



**Harjit Sandhu**

Managing Director  
FODO, The  
Association for  
Eye Care  
Providers



**Raymond Curran**

Head of  
Ophthalmic  
Services  
Health & Social  
Care Board,  
Northern Ireland



**Richard Knight**

Head of Policy  
Local Optical  
Committee  
Support Unit  
(LOCSU)

*W Stockdale*

**William  
Stockdale**

Chair  
Optometry  
Northern Ireland  
(ONI)



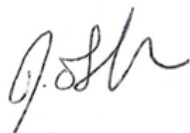
**Sali Davis**

Chief Executive  
Optometry  
Wales/Cymru



**David Quigley**

Chair  
Optometry  
Scotland



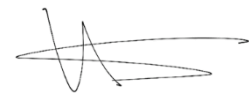
**David O'Sullivan**

Chief Optometric  
Adviser / Prif  
Optometrig  
Ymgynghorol  
Welsh  
Government /  
Llywodraeth  
Cymru



**Jay Dermott**

Representative  
Opticians'  
Academic  
Schools Council



**Will Holmes**

Chair  
Optometry  
Schools Council

- 
- i <https://optical.org/en/standards-and-guidance/standards-for-optical-students/>
  - ii <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/immunisation-against-infectious-disease-the-green-book#the-green-book>
  - iii <https://coronavirus-yellowcard.mhra.gov.uk/datasummary>
  - iv <https://www.acas.org.uk/working-safely-coronavirus/getting-the-coronavirus-vaccine-for-work/supporting-staff-to-get-vaccinated>
  - v <https://www.college-optometrists.org/news/2021/december/supporting-optometrists-in-their-vaccine-decisions>
  - vi <https://www.abdo.org.uk/coronavirus/>
  - vii England: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-vaccination/book-coronavirus-vaccination/>
  - viii Northern Ireland: <https://covid-19.hscni.net/get-vaccinated/>
  - ix Scotland: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/covid-19-vaccine>
  - x Wales: <https://gov.wales/get-your-covid-19-vaccination>