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RANZCO and Specsavers announce historic collaboration

In an unprecedented collaboration for the eye health sector, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists (RANZCO) and Specsavers Australia and New Zealand have announced a project which brings together the expertise of ophthalmologists and optometrists to provide more effective and efficient patient care pathways and improve eye health outcomes for people across Australia and New Zealand.

RANZCO, with input from both ophthalmologists and optometrists, is developing a series of eye care referral guidelines, initially providing guidelines for referral of glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and AMD.

The first of these referral guidelines, the RANZCO Referral Pathway for Glaucoma Management, is being launched today and is being made available to all optometrists and GPs across Australia and New Zealand.

These referral guidelines do not favour, and are not dependent upon, any particular practice referral system or methodology. They simply provide a resource which lays out a suggested referral pathway if certain signs and or symptoms are identified. The aim is to ensure patients receive the best care possible, in the most appropriate timeframe and from the appropriate health care provider.

RANZCO President, Dr Bradley Horsburgh, said "Ophthalmologists and optometrists, along with GPs, are committed to helping improve people's vision. We are all part of the eye health care system and it's important that we deliver that as smoothly and effectively as possible for patients. In addition, with a clear guide for referrals, we can ensure that the increasingly limited funding and resources for healthcare, both public and private, is used in the most efficient manner."

The referral guidelines are based on peer reviewed publications about best practice in relation to referrals for symptoms and disease areas.

Both RANZCO and Specsavers are seeking feedback from all ophthalmologists, optometrists and GPs who use the referral guidelines to feed into a review of their effectiveness and usability and their impact on outcomes for patients.

As part of this assessment process, Specsavers, as the largest provider of optometric eye care services to patients in Australia and New Zealand, will run a two-year pilot programme to efficiently gather significant metrics and data. RANZCO will then feed this information into the assessment and review the guidelines. Both parties will look to share resultant data with healthcare funding and management bodies to shed greater light on eye health and broader healthcare outputs.

Peter Larsen, Specsavers' Optometry Director, said that "With a growing and ageing population in both Australia and New Zealand we have a duty to ensure that there is ingrained collaboration between optometry and ophthalmology. It is not enough to say we work together, we actually need to set ourselves specific areas of collaboration and measure the effectiveness and efficiency of that

collaboration. This arrangement between Specsavers and RANZCO does just that, the goal being superior patient outcomes.”

Importantly, both RANZCO and Specsavers are keen to involve all optometrists and GPs from across Australia and New Zealand. RANZCO will also provide training sessions on the guidelines to be held during the RANZCO Congress. These sessions will be open to all optometrists and GPs. RANZCO will continue the leading role it already plays at Specsavers clinical events, which are already open to all optometrists.

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