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The experiences of the optometry profession of the quality and safety of patient care in Wales, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic

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Area (Health Board or CCG areas and country in which this research was conducted)

| All Wales

Key words:

| Patient safety, eyecare, qualitative, optometrists

Funding & commercial relationships

| KESS2 East Wales, Optometry Wales, Welsh Optometric Committee

Collaborators

| Optometry Wales, Welsh Optometric Committee

I am happy for our presentation at the symposium to be recorded and made available for attendees and others to view | ✓

I am happy for this abstract to be published | ✓

Submission questions

Title of presentation

| The experiences of the optometry profession in the quality and safety of eyecare in Wales

Abstract, must include the following four headings: Purpose, Methods, Results, Conclusions

Purpose: Delays in eyecare represent a longstanding issue with patients being put at risk of irreversible harm. These problems have been exacerbated as a result of the increased service pressures from the COVID-19 pandemic. Eyecare pathways are being restructured in Wales, to improve patient care and this includes managing more patients. This study aimed to obtain the views of optometrists on the quality and restructuring of eyecare, focusing on the development of the delivery and safety of primary eyecare with consideration of the disruptions due to COVID-19.

Methods: Twenty-five optometrists in Wales participated in semi-structured qualitative interviews using online video calls. The data were analysed thematically, using an interpretivist approach, to highlight practitioner's views and concerns about the quality and safety of eyecare.

Results: Six themes were identified relating to: the effect of COVID-19 on care quality including service disruptions; ways to reduce pressures on the eyecare system; practitioners' confidence and ability, including safety concerns around managing more patients; the need for effective communication; concerns around restructuring of services; and barriers and facilitators to incident reporting.

Conclusions: Optometrists were supportive of measures to increase shared care, with effective communication being paramount to maintain patient safety. There was desire for further training, which optometrists felt was vital to increasing confidence and ability to safely manage more complex patients. The majority of optometrists were supportive of incident reporting.

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