

# The BARS

BRITISH  
ASSOCIATION  
OF  
RETINAL  
SCREENING

# Chronicle



# BARS 2025

*Birmingham*

Friday 19th September  
Holiday Inn Birmingham City Centre,  
B5 4EW

TICKETS NOW AVAILABLE!



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# PRESIDENT UPDATE

*By Samantha Mann, BARS President*



As many of you know, I have been the BARS president for the last 2 and a half years which has been an amazing opportunity to be part of such a dedicated and experienced team. I have been blown away by the sheer level of commitment and time that the council spends every year to put together the conference and to keep the website and chronicle exciting and up to date. This is in addition to everyone's day to day jobs in their Local Screening Programmes.

After the conference last year, we sadly had to say goodbye to a number of members of council including Jane Cansfield and Alison Simpson who were retiring from their roles and Richard Bell, Lynsey Scott and Kasey Mitchell who also stepped down at the end of their tenures. This left the council with a markedly reduced number of people to keep everything going.

Thankfully our hugely talented co-chair Charlotte Wallis and brilliant Zoe Tobin have both agreed to stay on as Co-chairs to help run BARS going forwards. In this time of change-over and uncertainty, I felt I could not step down at the end of my 3 year tenure in September and have agreed to stay on for a further 2-3 years to help support the team.

We recently put out a call for new council members and have fortunately been able to appoint 7 very good and eager new recruits to the BARS council! We look forward to meeting them in the flesh at our June meeting and you can meet them later in this edition of the Chronicle!

This also means that we will have a 'new look' one day BARS conference this year which is to be held in Birmingham on Friday 19th September at the Holiday Inn Hotel. We hope to be able to attract lots of delegates by keeping costs down and finding an easily accessible venue. It may feel a bit different but will be packed with great speakers, a range of our usual trade stands, a poster competition with a chance to win £300. There is the opportunity to join an OCT workshop run by myself and Prof Tunde Peto from Belfast, for which we have an advert later on detailing what to expect from this new format. The conference will also be a great opportunity for networking with colleagues!

Lastly I'd like to thank the whole BARS council, both current and incoming new members, whom without them volunteering their time, hard work and enthusiasm, neither the conference, the website nor this chronicle would be possible.

I hope many of you can make it to Birmingham to meet us all and I look forward to seeing you there!

Samantha Mann

# MEET OUR NEWEST MEMBERS



**MARZENA ZOLADZ**  
Primary Care and Stakeholder  
Engagement Manager  
South East London DESP

I joined South East London Diabetic Eye Screening in June 2023 as a Primary Care and Stakeholder Engagement Manager. This role has enabled me to apply my extensive patient advocacy experience gained during my decade-long career with Healthwatch, where I supported people to have their voices heard and taken into account to provide informed improvements in NHS and social care. At Healthwatch I progressed from Engagement Officer to Operations Manager, strengthening my organisational and leadership skills. My passion lies in bringing a patient-centred perspective to healthcare, particularly within SEL DESP, and addressing health inequalities experienced by underserved communities. Skilled in organisational leadership, and stakeholder and patient engagement, I strive to improve healthcare access for all.

**LISA RICHARDSON**  
Screener/Grader  
HIOW DESP



My Diabetic Eye journey started in March 2021 when I joined the HIOW DESP, and I have not looked back. Since joining DESP I have gained my diploma as a Diabetic Eye Screener / Grader in January 2023, followed by arbitration in 2024 and I am currently working towards ROG status. In October 2024 I gained my Assessor Vocational Diploma.

I absolutely love my job and patient care is always at the heart of what I do daily. Whether I am screening, training, or assessing patient care is paramount. I have learnt so much in the last 4 years about eye screening, but I know there is more to learn and more I can do. Before working for Inhealth I had a lengthy career working with children in education for approximately 18 years. My first school was in London and then I moved to Hampshire / Surrey and worked in a couple of schools. I also worked for a well-known weight loss company for around 5 years, helping people achieve weight loss goals. Within this role, I also collaborated with local authorities to help with the National Pre-Diabetic Weight Loss Program. Working in education and weight management I have gained many transferable skills.

## ANANDITHA GOPAN

Trainee Retinal Screener Grader  
South East London DESP

With an eye for detail (pun intended) and a vision for better healthcare, I've always been passionate about both clinical care and the bigger picture of healthcare management. I hold an undergraduate degree in Optometry, and after working as a clinical Optometrist in India for about a year, I decided to pursue a Master's in Healthcare Management to deepen my understanding of healthcare systems. Currently, I'm a trainee Screener-Grader, having started in September 2024. Every day, I see first-hand the impact of diabetic eye screening in preserving vision, and I'm excited to be part of a field where small details make a big difference. During my time at university, I was actively involved in the Welfare Committee, where I got to bring ideas to life in creative ways—designing first-class posters (we literally designed boarding pass themed invitations!), engaging students on social media, and making sure everything ran smoothly. Coordinating teams, handling last-minute surprises, and keeping everything on track became second nature, honing my skills in planning, teamwork, and organization. I was also a proud member of the Volunteer Services Organization (VSO), where I worked to help students tackle important issues like substance abuse and promote well-being within the community. As part of my academic journey, I got the chance to combine my passion for creativity and education with some hands-on demonstrations during class. For World Sight Day, I created a model of the eye and extraocular muscles to show how they help the eyes move—a fun, interactive way to bring anatomy lessons to life! Now, I'm excited to contribute my growing experience in retinal screening and continue to bring my enthusiasm for learning and making things happen. Whether it's supporting events or simply keeping things on schedule, I'm eager to play an active role in the team. Looking forward to contributing, learning, and making a positive impact!





## KIRAN AMAN

Head of ophthalmic Imaging department  
James Paget Hospital

I am deeply passionate about ophthalmology and patient-centric care in a multi-disciplinary setting. I hold a master's degree in Diagnostic Ophthalmology from the University of Manchester and currently serve as the Senior Ophthalmic Science Practitioner and Head of the Ophthalmic Imaging Department at the NHS teaching hospital. In my current role, I manage comprehensive ophthalmic imaging pathways and function as a virtual retinal image reviewer interpreter (Diabetic Retinopathy screening, Hydroxychloroquine, Choroidal Nevus and AMD patients) for retinal doctors, significantly enhancing both consultant efficiency and patient care. My managerial duties include overseeing appraisals, attendance management, induction plans, audits, and other administrative tasks. I have collaborated with mentors and colleagues on research publications, and I am eager to pursue further research and education opportunities. I am a self-motivated, proactive individual with excellent time management, clinical and organizational skills. I am driven by an unending urge to learn and help society through my knowledge, skills, and positive energy!

## ALI ASKARI

Programme Manager  
North Central London DESP

Ali Askari holds a BA (Hons) in Business Management and a Master's in Public Administration (MPA) with a specialization in "Executive Health Management and Hospital Leadership." He is a Prince2-certified project manager with over 15 years of programme and project management experience outside the NHS, where he gained strong business acumen and a deep understanding of organizational dynamics.

Ali joined the NHS 15 years ago, starting as General Manager for commissioning and design at the hospital. For the past 14 years, he has served as the North Central London (NCL) Diabetic Eye Screening Programme (DESP) Programme Manager, a service delivered by North Middlesex University Hospital NHS Trust, now part of the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust. Amongst other operational roles, Ali managed the ophthalmology department and served as "silver command" and "on-call manager" at the Hospital. Ali has been a Screening Professional Clinical Advisor (SPCA) for NHS England and the Screening Quality Assurance Service (SQAS) for nine years, participating in over 14 External Quality Assurance (EQA) visits. Ali is passionate about improving healthcare efficiency and delivering high-quality outcomes. He has actively contributed to the Diabetic Eye Screening Programme (DESP) and has participated in the British Association of Retinal Screening (BARS) conferences for 13 years.





## KAREN RIGBY

Screeener/Grader  
South Tees DESP

Before becoming involved with DESP in 2005 when I joined County Durham and Darlington Screening programme as a Screener/Grader, I worked as Medical Laboratory Assistant in Histology where I used to do gross specimen photography and was about to embark on my Foundation Degree in Bio-Medical Science when a colleague told me about the Diabetic Eye Screening Programme that was starting in the area and how much I would enjoy it, it involved patients, photography and pathology - what wasn't there to like! I quickly became extremely interested in how the pathway and programme worked (or didn't in the early days) and became the Failsafe Officer for Darlington within a couple of years of the programme starting. After having my second child in 2009, I left screening for a period of 2 years but missed it so applied for a job with South Tees DESP as a Screener/Grader and I was lucky to be back doing what I loved. I participated in creating our Trust webpage which I really enjoyed. In my spare time I am a keen baker and cake decorator, dressmaker and craftsperson and always like to be busy. I am keen to learn new skills and take on any tasks to help the BARS Council where I can.

## SIMON WHITE

Programme Manager  
South Tees DESP

I have worked for the NHS since 2005 where I started as a screener and Grader at the North Tees DESP. In 2009 I moved to South Tees as senior grader and made my way up to Programme Manager. I completed all nine units of the old City & Guilds in screening and assessed units for staff within my team. I have been a DES EQA peer reviewer for over 10 years, and I am also a member of the DES camera testing group. I am a self-confessed geek and love my facts and figures. Our programme has used OCT within DS (was OPDR) since 2012 so I am interested to see what differences will crop up with the new DS with OCT pathway. I am passionate about screening and always looking for ways to improve our patient care. I am honoured to be part of the council and continue to develop the amazing work they do.



# MY DIABETIC EYE SCREENING JOURNEY

*Sofar...*

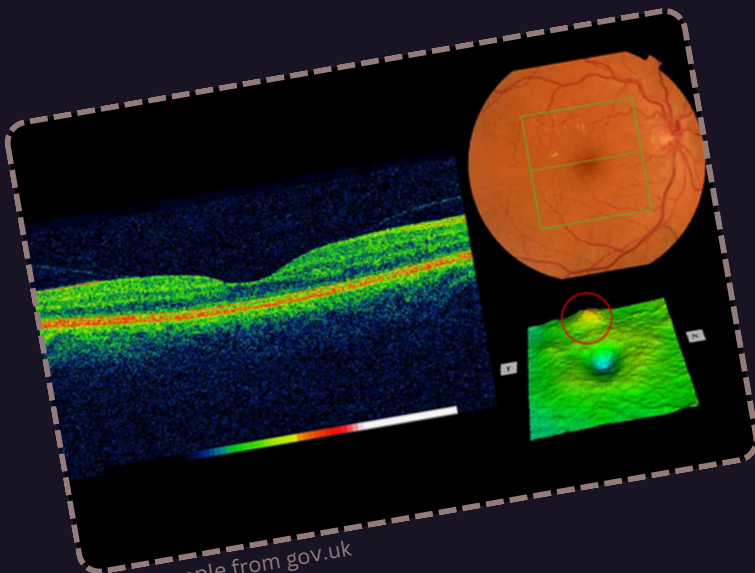
BY KIM LOVELL



My journey in DES began in 2006 in Exeter as a trainee screener grader. A few years on and I moved to Somerset as a Senior Screener Grader and it was here that I was encouraged to apply for the National Grading Lead position with PHE, on a secondment, in January 2021. In October 2021 two big changes happened, PHE disbanded, and the National team was moved over to be in NHSE and I took on being Manager at Somerset. Queue a very interesting couple of years.

The following years kept me busy, flipping between my national role and my local role, usually with two laptops on the go, learning new ways of working and different governance schemes in both roles and I found both were equally challenging in different ways.

In October 2023 following a great deal of preparation work with the Portfolio Team and the IT Suppliers we finally introduced the long-awaited 2-year intervals project which had first been suggested by the National Screening Committee back in 2016. With the expected reduction in activity following 2-year intervals, we thought 'Why not give ourselves something else to do' so we decided this was a good time to also introduce OCT with the idea that this would mean no reduction in staffing for the services and would be beneficial to both the wider NHS and to service users.



OCT example from gov.uk





# CONTINUED...

In order to get the message out to the stakeholders about these changes I found myself suddenly giving presentations at National conferences, including twice at the yearly BARS conferences, and presenting over Teams to over 100 people at a time, including training and Question and Answer sessions.

I have found that working for the National Portfolio Team has been both challenging and rewarding. I have travelled to places I have never been before and I have done things that I would never have believed myself capable of. I can honestly say that now, as I slip into semi-retirement, I am proud of the achievements of the last few years, of how much I have pushed myself to face new experiences, and it has been an honour to be part of the team that brought about changes that have been waited for so long in Diabetic Eye Screening. I now look forward to concentrating on managing the Somerset DESP and making that service the best it can be.



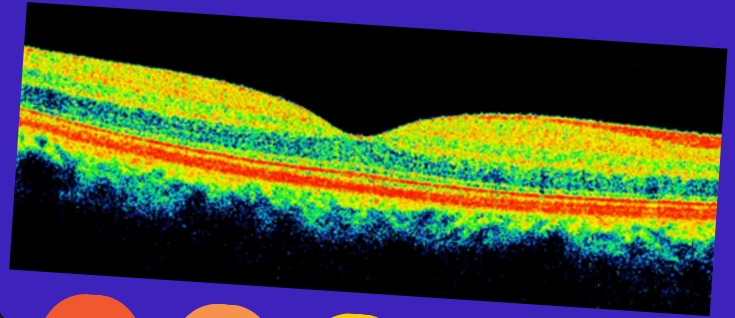
Photography by Kamran Rajaby



# BARS OCT WORKSHOP



We're excited to announce that this year's conference will bring a fresh new format to our OCT workshop! Thanks to your feedback from past events and our commitment to creating a wonderful educational experience, we've put together a fun and engaging introduction to OCT that we think you'll really enjoy!



## FEATURING *expertise from*

Mrs Samantha Mann, Consultant Ophthalmologist  
St Thomas' Hospital, London & SELDESP Lead

Prof Tunde Peto, Professor of Clinical Ophthalmology  
Queen's University, Belfast

Jasmine Lyall, Surveillance Practitioner, SELDESP

Amir Gaas, Slit Lamp Examiner & Screener / Grader SELDESP



## WHAT TO EXPECT:



Discover how to capture high quality OCT images!

Pick up some practical tips for interpreting and grading those images

Explore real OCT case studies and have some fun with our quiz!

Get ready for the upcoming changes in the DESP pathway

**Limited Availability**  
**Book Now!**

# Thank you

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