Bill Harvey introduces the second in a series of interactive CET exercises based upon the recent series of articles by Dr Nizar Hirji concerning the legal requirements of eye care practitioners (C58763, one interactive CET point suitable for optometrists, dispensing opticians, contact lens opticians and therapeutic optometrists)

Using the six articles in the series as source material, you are invited to consider a case study describing one aspect of practitioner or patient behaviour or action about which you will be asked to have a discussion with a colleague and reach a conclusion as to the legality of any advice or outcome. The case examples selected have been designed as having relevance to each of the professional categories, so for these exercises you are required to undertake discussion with a peer of the same category as your own (optometrist with optometrist, dispensing optician with dispensing optician and so on).

CASE STUDY – 2
An employed registered dispensing optician with contact lens qualifications fitted and supplied Mr Zeta, a male 17-year-old non-smoking mathematics undergraduate in your place of practice (not part of an NHS hospital), with a daily disposable silicone hydrogel contact lens for his right eye only. He was anisometropic and amblyopic in his left eye.

Spectacle Rx:
RE -3.00DS (6/5)
LE -8.00 DS (6/60)
BVD 12mm
Dispensed -3.00DS balance lens in spectacles

Contact Lens Rx:
RE SiH: 8.8/14.5/-3.00 DS (6/5)
LE no correction: CF@ 3m

Apart from the left eye being amblyopic since birth (diagnosis confirmed as a child), there was nothing else significant or untoward in the case history, save for a family history of amblyopia at the time of the fitting.

Mr Zeta had read through the patient information leaflet that was given to him by the practice prior to attending the diagnostic fitting visit (June of that year) which stated that ‘Modern contact lenses are very safe as long as you follow your optometrist’s advice about how to wear and look after them and have regular check-ups.’ He was also aware that the leaflet said ‘it is possible that anything that touches your eye could introduce an infection’ and knew that he had to follow a strict hygiene routine in the wear and care of the lens for his right eye. He was seen for follow-ups regularly which revealed excellent compliance and RE 6/5 with the contact lens, meticulous hygiene, daily disposal modality, nothing untoward clinically (ocular and general health), and no missed appointments. His clinical and practice records corroborate this.

He came into the practice in December having worn the contact lens successfully for two years stating that he had had to attend the local eye hospital as an emergency after a sudden painful red eye episode with his ‘good’ eye some nine weeks ago. The hospital diagnosed microbial keratitis and ascribed it to contact lens wear, treated it successfully and discharged him. However, his visual acuity was now 6/10- (NIPH) with spectacles in his right eye.

You are approached by the patient, who wants to know what action he can take against the contact lens fitter, stating that he has suffered considerable distress, incurred costs, and now has permanently reduced corrected vision in his right eye instead of the 6/5 that he had before the incident as detailed in the clinical records. This he says will impact on his career and may mean that he may not be legal to drive. He acknowledges that he was informed of the possibility of contact lenses introducing an infection by the patient information leaflet, but not that such an infection could be sight threatening and that he had meticulously followed the advice that he was given for the wear and care of the lens. He also indicated that he was never told the actual level of risk of this type of infection – only that it was possibility. He went on to say that had he been given this information he would not have consented to treatment with a contact lens for his only good eye.

Your discussion with a colleague of the same registrant category (optometrist, dispensing optician, contact lens optician or therapeutic optometrist) needs to include the following:

- What action can the patient take against the practitioner/practice/employer?
- The leaflet regarding contact lenses issued to the patient prior to the supply of the lens was not one that the practitioner had written but one supplied by another organisation. Does that have any impact?

Go to opticianonline.net and click into the CET zone where you can select this exercise. Here you will find full instructions on how to achieve your point.