



# Keratoconus Self-Help and Support Association

## Ninth Conference



### Speaker Biographies



#### David Gable

KC Group Chairman – retired from work in 2007 after 41 years with HSBC administering family trusts and pension schemes. Developed Keratoconus in his 20s and benefited from corneal grafts in his 40s.

#### Mr. Amit Patel

Mr. Patel is a Consultant Ophthalmologist at the University Hospital Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust. Since his appointment in 2011, he has set up and established corneal transplant surgery at the Trust and also leads the Cataract and Corneal Service. He obtained his postgraduate training in eminent teaching centres in Wales, Yorkshire and London. Mr. Patel was awarded the prestigious Pfizer Ophthalmic Fellowship Award by the Royal College of Ophthalmologists and undertook further subspecialty training in corneal transplant and laser refractive surgery with world renowned surgeons in Italy and Moorfields Eye Hospital, London.



He specialises in cataract and corneal surgery. His special interests include customised cataract surgery and lamellar corneal transplantation and he has published several book chapters and papers in peer reviewed journals and presented numerous papers and posters at scientific meetings. Mr. Patel has also been an invited speaker at various national and international conferences and has been gained several awards and prizes for his work.



### **Dr. Waheeda Illahi**

Dr. Waheeda Illahi was appointed as Consultant Optometrist and Head of Optometry Services at the Birmingham & Midland Eye Centre in late 2010 having previously served as a Principal Optometrist at the same tertiary centre for approximately 10 years. Waheeda's career has been dedicated to the NHS and she has over 20 years experience in managing Keratoconus and other corneal abnormalities using

specialist contact lenses.

As Head of Optometry Services at BMEC her personal clinical workload involves managing the most complex cases as well as supporting her colleagues in developing their clinical skills. Waheeda's initial undergraduate training was at Aston University and she later developed her academic interests by completing an MSc and a PhD researching Keratoconus from UMIST (Manchester). She continues to develop her interest in research and considers her fascinating career journey to only have been possible due to the inspiration she gets from the patience, perseverance and strength of the remarkable patients she meets every day.



### **Dr. Stephanie Campbell**

Stephanie has worked with people who have keratoconus since training in Nottingham hospital in 2010, and is driven to pursue a holistic approach to clinical care and the modernisation of services. Always fascinated by the underlying cause of the condition, she completed her PhD in keratoconus in 2017, studying the reasons for the high prevalence in Down's syndrome. Stephanie currently works as a

cornea specialist optometrist in Bristol Eye Hospital and as eye lead for the '*neighbourhood care networks*' in the Aneurin Bevan Health Board in South Wales, where she assists the co-operation between optometrists, pharmacists, GPs to improve community NHS services and helps prevent unnecessary hospital visits for patients.

Stephanie currently works in a start-up company developing computer game apps to remotely measure vision on tablets and smartphones.

## **Mary Bairstow**

Mary began her career in hospital optometry in Birmingham where her interest in both low vision and keratoconus was 'sparked'. She is particularly grateful that she was able to work alongside renowned contact lens specialists at the time.



She left her full-time role in the NHS to join a local society (*Birmingham Focus*) and was able to develop one of the first multi-disciplinary teams in low vision (managing OT, Rehabilitation Workers, Orthoptists and Optometrists).

In 2000 Mary took up a national role supporting the development of low vision services through collaborative working. This collaboration later became part of Vision UK and now Mary's work focuses on developing national strategy on a local and national basis. Throughout her career she has continued to practice in the NHS – specialising in low vision optometry.



## **Michele Acton**

Michele is Chief Executive of Fight for Sight, the UK's leading eye research charity that funds pioneering research to stop sight loss. After graduating from Trinity College, Oxford with a degree in PPE, Michele began her career as an investment banker advising companies on raising finance and mergers and acquisitions. After 15 years of banking, she decided to change careers and became the Chief Executive of UCL Hospitals Charitable Foundation before joining Fight for Sight at the end of 2006. She is also a Trustee and the Treasurer of the Centre for Ageing Better.

## **Dr. Rubina Ahmed**

Rubina is the Head of Research at Fight for Sight. She has a PhD in immunology and has been working in research funding since leaving the lab. She has previously worked with the Wellcome Trust, the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs) and Cancer Research UK. As Head of Research at Fight for Sight, Rubina is responsible for implementing the recently launched research strategy, including overseeing the funding schemes offered by the charity and developing funding partnerships with external organisations.

