



Centre for Eye Health

# YEAR IN REVIEW

2021



## OVERVIEW

### Professor Michael Kalloniatis Centre Director

In a year of COVID-19 disruptions, the Centre for Eye Health team went above and beyond in all areas, inspired by the Centre's goal: to reduce the incidence of preventable blindness. This report outlines our key achievements for the 2021 calendar year - achievements that reflect not only the extraordinarily high skill level of our team, but also their dedication to pursuing excellence.

As Centre Director, I am extremely proud of each and every member of the team, and thankful for the financial support from both Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and the University of New South Wales which allowed us to build such a valuable resource for our community.



### 2021 Highlights

- 11,799 referrals and 11,041 appointments.
- 1,213 patients examined per full time equivalent optometrist.
- 74% increase in webinar subscriptions.
- Launch of the CFEH ATLAS with 137 subscribers in 2021.
- Delivered 37 educational presentations, and contributed 11 articles to industry journals.
- Centre for Eye Health-based team members chief investigators on a NHMRC Ideas Grant in collaboration with the University of Technology Sydney (UTS).
- 30 papers in peer-reviewed journals published in print, or online ahead of print.



## CLINICAL SERVICES

### **Michael Yapp** **Head of Clinical Operations**



In 2021 our appointment wait times increased to 6.6 weeks, compared with 2.8 weeks in 2020. This is the result of both increased demand for services, and COVID-19 related delays and changes. There are several initiatives currently underway to address this, including targeting future referrals specifically towards patients who may otherwise go without the treatment and care they need due to health access inequities.

During Sydney's 16 week lockdown our Cameron Centre clinic in Parramatta and our UNSW clinic in Kensington ran appointments for urgent and critical care patients only. Our clinical and operational teams worked tirelessly to triage and reschedule all other appointments. Since re-opening in October and resumption of COVID-19 "normal" testing capacities, these same invaluable team members are now working to address the subsequent backlog.

Operational changes in 2021 for the Cameron Centre included the introduction of a technician position, and a reorganisation of the testing spaces. These initiatives have increased daily appointment capacity at the Cameron Centre.

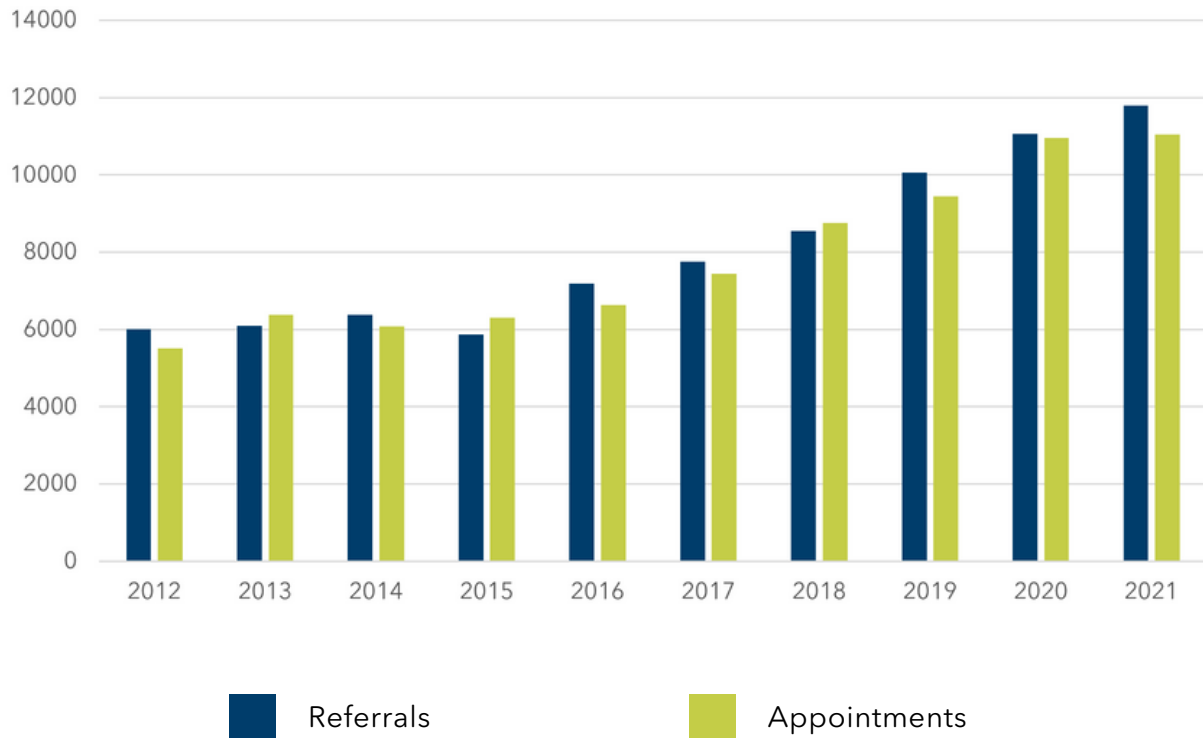
Figures for both clinics combined show that the number of patients examined in 2021 was on-par with 2020, and 17% higher than the pre-COVID-19 levels of 2019.

Both clinics continue to have excellent collaborative working relationships with Prince of Wales and Westmead ophthalmology departments, ensuring that patients are seen by the right person at the right time in the right place.

The number of patients examined per full time optometrist in 2021 was 1213 (an increase of 3.6% compared to the pre-covid levels of 2019 despite reduced testing capacity for 16 weeks of the year).



### Centre for Eye Health patient numbers 2012-2021



## OPERATIONS

**Sarah Holland**  
**Executive Manager**

2021 continued to create challenges across the world, especially for health services. The Centre continued to respond to the backlogs, lockdowns and heightened risks in an efficient and safe manner, which always allowed for patients with potential time critical issues to be seen across both sites. Despite all of these changes, the team continued to work diligently and we saw 11,041 patients during the year.



Financial efficiency savings continue to be realised despite the reduction in Medicare income, most notably in reduced staffing costs and IT savings.

Finally, continued effort was made to ensure effective communication with our stakeholders. This included the comprehensive education program, regular updates in light of the constant changes to service, free access to training materials, social media updates, and a website overhaul (ongoing into 2022) as well as collaborations with Optometry Australia and Optometry NSW/ACT. Similarly, associations with Glaucoma Australia and the Macular Disease foundation continued to evolve to ensure the best possible care for our patients.

The Centre continues to provide a unique and much needed service to patients within the community and will continue to build on these services in 2022.

## EDUCATION

### **Michele Clewett** **Education Manager**

2021 was a year of successful innovation and development in the Centre for Eye Health Education space. In March we launched the subscription-based ATLAS – an online resource of posterior eye disease, illustrated using multi-modal imaging. We also redesigned our annual webinar program to accommodate changes to the CPD requirements for Australian optometrists. The result of these changes and associated marketing led to an increase in subscriber numbers from 129 in 2020 to 225 in 2021 (a 74% increase). ATLAS also attracted 137 subscribers by year end.



Centre for Eye Health educators were honoured with invitations to present at national and international conferences in 2021, including both the American Academy of Optometry annual meeting and “Best of Boston” virtual conference, the New Zealand Association of Optometrists (NZAO) annual conference, the WAVE conference, and various online Optometry Australia events. In total, our team delivered 37 presentations throughout 2021.



Additionally, our educators were invited to contribute 11 articles to non peer-reviewed industry publications, including Optometry Connection, Mivision, Review of Optometry and the Macular Disease Foundation of Australia (MDFA) health practitioner newsletter.

Continuing the Centre's history of supporting the education of UNSW Optometry and Vision Science students, our team again presented OPTM3205 (Disease processes of the eye 2), and hosted final year optometry students in our clinic with excellent student feedback.

By helping both students and practicing optometrists develop their skills in disease diagnosis and management, our education team not only makes a valuable contribution to the Centre for Eye Health goal of reducing preventable blindness, but also helps ensure referrals to our clinical services are both appropriate and timely. In preparing educational resources, our team review the latest literature around ocular disease and share this knowledge with their peers through weekly clinical updates, which helps to ensure that Centre for Eye Health clinicians remain at the forefront of optometric practice.

## RESEARCH

### **Associate Professor Gordon Doig** **Head of Research**

2021 saw the Centre for Eye Health research team (11 researchers and 10 research students) welcome one new PhD student, who will contribute to projects supported by our active grants. These grants include a NHMRC Ideas Grant, a NHMRC Investigator Grant, and a project grant from Novartis Australia and New Zealand.

Further grant success was also forthcoming late in the year with the awarding of an additional NHMRC grant through a collaboration with the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). This new grant will support a research project investigating the use of artificial intelligence to detect refractable glaucoma.



Our research team published 28 papers in peer-reviewed journals in 2021 with a further 2 published online ahead of print, and two accepted in 2021 for publication in 2022. This includes several publications in top-tier journals such as the American Journal of Ophthalmology, and Ophthalmology.

## LINKS

[Publication details for 2021 peer reviewed journals, including links to full text where available.](#)

[Industry non-peer review articles for 2021.](#)

[Educational presentations for 2021.](#)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Our work is possible thanks to the generosity of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and their supporters, and the University of New South Wales (UNSW).

The logo for Guide Dogs, featuring the words "Guide Dogs." in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.The logo for UNSW Sydney, with "UNSW" in a large, bold, black sans-serif font and "SYDNEY" in a smaller, black sans-serif font below it.