



SUCCESSFUL SEMINAR ON DISTRIBUTION CHANNELS OF CONTACT LENSES

A European Contact Lens Forum (ECLF) - PRESS RELEASE 24/10/2011

For the first time, close to 100 eye care professionals, distributors, manufacturers and trade associations gathered for a one-day seminar on distribution channels of contact lenses on Wednesday Oct. 19. 2011. The Seminar was organized by the European Contact Lens Forum (ECLF) around the theme:

The rapid evolution of technology, distribution channels and consumer behaviour means potential changes in the way consumers will access contact lenses. This seminar aims to provide insights into present and future issues, bearing in mind the interest of the consumer and the health of the patient while providing easy access to contact lenses.

As Charles Snelling, Euromcontact President and Chair of the seminar said: *It is good to see that all distributors of contact lenses appear ready to undertake voluntary steps to increase consumer safety.*

The morning session focused on the facts:

- changes in the market
- share of Internet sales
- consumer behavior and
- safety issues.

The two scientific papers by Dr. Florence Malet, President of ECLSO and the results of the CLEER project explained by Helmer Schweizer, Chair of ECLF, showed that *alternative* distribution of contact lenses, especially cosmetic lenses may be a cause of severe vision damage.

This increase of risk alone is not likely to influence consumers. Contact lens purchases on the Internet are still steadily increasing and this is not likely to change in the coming years. While price may be one of the reasons, all speakers agreed that convenience and delivery service are the highest-ranking reasons for purchasing contact lenses over the Internet.

Reassuringly, contributions by major Internet players showed that wearer safety can be assured by pointing out the need for an appropriate fitting and after care, as well as a good cooperation with the eye care professionals.

The afternoon debate provided ample avenues for thought and next steps.

In a European market with a wide spectrum of regulated and unregulated distribution, the fast way forward is to work on voluntary ways to ensure consumer safety such as enhanced co-operation with ECPs, certification of consumer eye health information on websites and validated guidelines for Internet distributors. The Health On the Net foundation, whose mission is to promote the effective and reliable use of technologies in the healthcare domain, explained how certification may improve the transparency of websites with medical or health information.

The European Contact Lens Forum is very keen to turn this seminar into an annual event so plan for the next edition in October 2012, at Amsterdam-Schiphol Airport.

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