

MEDIA RELEASE

First female recipient for prestigious vision medal

Tuesday 24 July 2018. Optometry Australia has announced that Sydney optometrist Professor Fiona Stapleton has been named the 2018 recipient of the organisation's prestigious H Barry Collin Research Medal.

Professor Stapleton is the first woman to receive the peer nominated medal in its 41 year history.

Optometry Australia CEO Lyn Brodie, warmly congratulated Professor Stapleton saying, "The H Barry Collin Medal is awarded to the leading luminaries within our profession and we are delighted that the spotlight this year falls on a woman who has done so much to advance optometric research and clinical application not only in Australia, but globally".

In 2007 Professor Stapleton became the first female head of an optometry school in Australia when appointed Head of Optometry and Vision Science at UNSW Sydney and she received the medal for her research in contact lens infection, particularly corneal infection.

Many of Professor Stapleton's 224 publications in journals have covered this field and she has led international collaborations on contact lens and corneal infection. She has conducted studies to establish and help reduce infection risks and has received other high profile international medals and awards for this work.

'I was surprised and humbled to receive this medal and would like to thank Optometry Australia and my colleagues because it is a peer nominated award,' Professor Stapleton said.

Professor Stapleton studied optometry in the UK and worked at the world renowned Moorfields Eye Hospital in the contact lens department and eye infection wards. Many of these patients were there because they wore contact lenses.

'I did my PhD on contact lens infection. We can't get rid of these infections but we can help lessen the severity of disease and better understand risk factors including which organisms cause disease so we can understand how to better treat them and make the wearing of contact lenses safer for everyone,' she said.

One trend, decorative contact lenses such as cosmetic coloured contact lenses or circle contact lenses which make eyes appear larger, was leading to contact lens infections in young females in Asia, she said. These are obtained from unregistered sources, rather than from optometrists who give proper advice and aftercare, which reduce the likelihood of infection.

Professor Stapleton will submit a paper for publication in Optometry Australia's journal, *Clinical and Experimental Optometry*, one of the top three optometry journals in the world. She will also receive a cash prize to support her research work.

Background:

The H Barry Collin Research Medal recognises outstanding contributions to the advancement of knowledge in optics, vision science or clinical optometry by a person who is an Australian citizen or a graduate of an Australian optometry school, or who has done a significant part of his or her research in an Australian institution.

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Level 1, 68-72 York Street, South Melbourne Victoria 3205 | PO Box 1037, South Melbourne Vic 3205
Telephone: 03 9668 8500 | Fax: 03 9682 0928 | Email: optometryaustralia@optometryaustralia.org.au
www.optometry.org.au | ABN 17 004 622 431

The medal is named after Emeritus Professor H Barry Collin AM, a distinguished optometrist, academic, teacher and researcher, who became editor of *Clinical and Experimental Optometry* in 1993 and retired as Editor-in-Chief 24 years later in 2018 aged 85.

Nominations for the medal open in November each year.

Photograph: Professor Stapleton

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Contact:

Kerry I'Anson, General Manager, Marketing & Communications, Optometry Australia
0419 004 920, k.ianson@optometry.org.au

Optometry Australia is the peak professional body for optometrists. Representing eight out of every 10 Australian-based optometrists, Optometry Australia's focus is to lead and advance the profession of optometry by putting eye-health front and centre of Australian health care.