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## News

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16 October 2009

### Re-regulation unlikely in age of internet sales

**Re-regulation of dispensing to prevent spectacle sales over the internet would not happen unless the current regime was shown to be harming the public, according to GOC deputy registrar Jon Levett.**

Speaking to Association of British Dispensing Opticians (ABDO) members at the ABDO Conference in Brighton last week, Levett said a lack of such evidence meant the GOC would be unlikely to persuade the Department of Health to consider re-regulation again.

'Eighteen months ago we went to the Department to deal with the issues around internet access to see if there are regulations that could be tightened up and we got the same answer that we need evidence,' he said.

Levett also warned: 'If you open this up, it might not go the way you want. In other words, there may be further deregulation as the issues would have to be consulted on and there may be a very strong lobby for further deregulation.'

Levett gave his views as part of a panel of optical professionals fielding questions from ABDO's membership. ABDO president Barry Duncan voiced concern that customers were often not buying spectacles in practices after obtaining prescriptions because 'they're buying them in bucket shops or on the internet'.

However, Local Optical Committee Support Unit chairman Alan Tinger suggested the internet and 'bucket shops' were not a major threat and re-regulating to restrict their impact would be unnecessary. He said that to do so would be to expend 'time and energy trying to block out threats, rather than knocking them out by offering something better'.

John Fried, master of The Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers added: 'If you practice your professional, ethically, professionally and correctly, you have nothing to fear from someone who's trying to undercut you or undermine you.'

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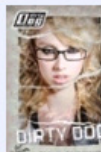
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