

Further project description for RS656 – Eye Health

A	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“Children in Welsh schools attending for sight tests. Some linguistic barrier when reading letters on letter chart. Lack of Welsh near vision chart to test reading ability for these children”</i>
B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>“We tend to automatically speak Welsh to first language Welsh speakers in this practice”.</i>• <i>“There has been no need to implement any Welsh in practice”</i>• <i>“I think it is completely pointless. I don't believe there is a single person in Wales who speaks Welsh and not English”</i>• <i>“It's nice for virtue Signalling and as a dying language should not be encouraged. The world speaks English”</i>• <i>“In most places, a waste of time, effort and resources - a mere politically correct sop that mainly benefits politicians with an anti-Westminster axe to grind.”</i>

Figure 1. Comments from Welsh optical practices about A) Experiences of the bilingual barriers faced when providing an optical service. B) the 'Active offer' of the Welsh language in health care and Welsh Language Standards (The questionnaire was launched in 2023).

Methods

We intend to examine the clinical notes/records of patients with common chronic eye conditions, such as glaucoma, age-related macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy. We will note the language used in their consultations and the results of tests used to diagnose and monitor the condition of the eye (e.g. visual acuities, VF, tonometry, gonioscopy, optic nerve assessment, fundus imaging). We will aim to include a minimum of 150 patients in each disease group (50 English speaker receiving care in English (control group), 50 Welsh speakers receiving care in English, 50 Welsh speakers receiving care in Welsh).

In 2023 a second questionnaire was provided to the public (patient perspective) to investigate their experiences of optical care in Welsh, there were around 140 respondents but we want to deepen the work. So, another aspect of data collection for this project will be to work with the optical practices to provide the questionnaire to their patients and to conduct semi-structured interviews with respondents (n=20-30) to find out their personal experiences of the Welsh language in optical care and its impact on them. The questionnaire and interviews will be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively (thematic analysis). We will secure ethical approval for this project.

Aims:

To investigate...

- *Does care in Welsh/English affect the severity of eye disorders at the time of diagnosis?*
- *Does care in Welsh/English affect the progression/severity of eye disorders in the long term?*
- *Patients' perceptions/experiences of optical services in Welsh*

Significance

There is literature on the patient's right to care in their mother tongue and the need for bilingual services for vulnerable people where there may be a lack of ability to communicate in English. But, at present there is a lack of evidence of the effect of care in the patient's main language, or the lack of care (in any language), on physiological health indicators. The aim of this project is to investigate the impact of language on the patient's own health with the aim of encouraging the introduction of positive practices and developments where needed to improve the quality of care. Another long-term aim of the research is to gather evidence to support the Welsh Government's effort to introduce laws that increase bilingual provision in healthcare.