



## **PRESS RELEASE**

No: 60/2015

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> February 2015

### **GHA to introduce new Colorimetry Service**

The GHA is pleased to announce that it has repatriated yet another clinical service from the UK.

In collaboration with the Gibraltar Dyslexia Support Group and with the support of a charitable donation from the Bonita Trust, the GHA is making arrangements for a new Colorimetry Service to be made available locally to treat a condition called Visual Stress.

This condition occurs due to problems with visual imaging by the brain, resulting in reading difficulties that are totally separate to those caused by the need for prescription spectacles. It is a separate condition to Dyslexia although some people with Dyslexia can also suffer from Visual Stress.

Minister for Health John Cortes, in announcing the programme said that “it is very important for the health system to be able to assist those with reading difficulties achieve their full potential in life. Up to now these people have had to go to the UK for diagnosis and treatment.” He added that “funding towards the cost of the tinted lenses will be in line with the Optical Voucher Scheme for children up to the age of 16 years”.

If visual stress is suspected, it is very important to have an initial full eye examination carried out by an Optometrist in order to rule out any underlying problems such as a need for glasses. An Orthoptist will then rule out other causes of reading difficulties such as eye coordination problems requiring eye exercises, before going on to assess with coloured overlays. Although coloured overlays and filters are not a treatment for dyslexia itself, the improvement in comfort for reading combined with existing educational strategies may have a useful effect on reading in the longer term.

Michelle Brown, the GHA’s Head Orthoptist stated that “it is now possible to determine whether reading difficulties are amplified by visual stress and if symptoms improve with coloured filters. In these cases, after an initial trial with overlays we will be able to indicate the precise tint to be incorporated into spectacles.”



Children in full time education may be referred by the Educational Psychologist. An agreement has been reached between the GHA and the Gibraltar Dyslexia Support Group whereby adults with reading difficulties should have a full eye examination to rule out other causes. Members of the public are advised to contact the GDSG or Michelle Brown, Head Orthoptist at the GHA for further information.

The GHA is deeply grateful for this donation from the Bonita Trust and is pleased to be collaborating with the Gibraltar Dyslexia Support Group. With cooperation from local Optician Practices, the GHA will work to help reduce the impact of this problem on our community.