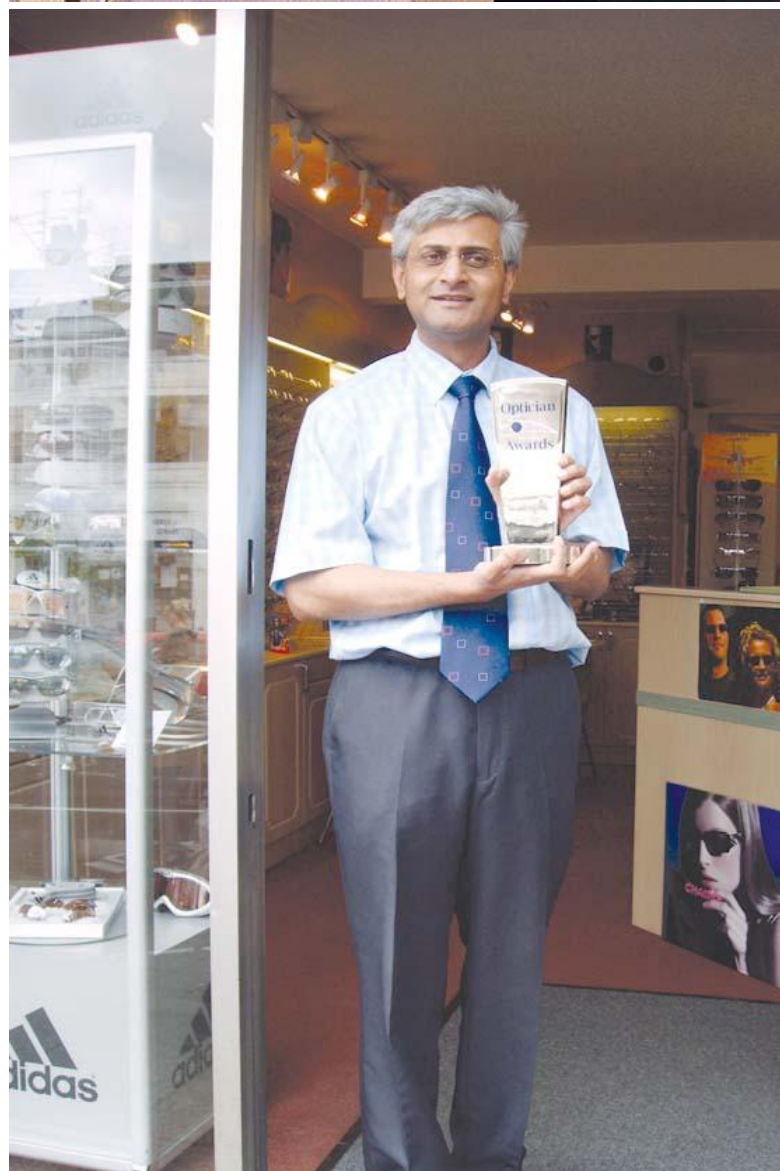


High flyers in optics



Radlett Opticians proudly receives prestigious award

YEARS of investment in modern equipment such as digital cameras, glaucoma detection equipment and computerised patient record card scanning and storage finally paid off for Kirit Patel when Radlett Opticians won the prestigious Technology Practice of the Year Award held at the Radisson Hotel in Portland Square on Tuesday 25 April.

Radlett Opticians were shortlisted with three others and were surprised to win on their first time and entering the awards held by National Opticians.

TECHNOLOGY PRACTICE OF THE YEAR

The award was in recognition of the practitioner's ability to demonstrate the most effective use of technology for the benefit of the patient. Particular emphasis was placed on the detection of ocular conditions and provision of strong eyecare.



Cutting edge

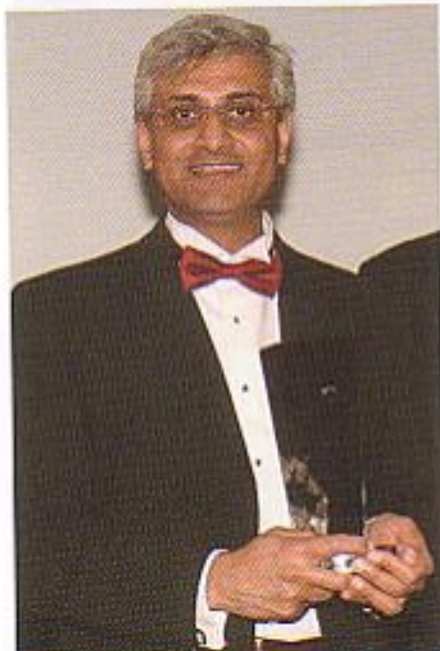
Bill Harvey reports on why Radlett Opticians was chosen as the winner of the *Optician* award for Technology Practice of the Year

Many readers will be familiar with Kirit Patel, at least by name. As a busy practising optometrist based in Radlett, Hertfordshire, Patel has always found the time to submit interesting case studies for publication. The varied range of these – in the past we have had reports on conditions ranging from leucocoria to craniopharyngioma – bears testament not only to Patel's enthusiasm for this work, but also his ability to incorporate the very latest technology into his patient assessment, making recording and displaying of clinical data that much easier.

This year's judges had no hesitation in naming Patel the winner. His practice is a small independent clinic serving a town with a population of around 15,000. In his 16 years at the practice, he has established a loyal patient base, which he cares for using the latest in assessment equipment.

To list just a selection of the equipment available, Patel uses a Canon digital fundus camera, Grafton slit lamp imaging system, the Thomson City 2000 computer display chart, a City Hess screen, the Oculus Easygraph hand-held tomographer, a Humphrey visual field analyser, GDx nerve fibre layer analyser and the Clear VU patient database software.

Patel says the decision to invest in technology was based on providing the best care for patients, and notes that next year the practice will be investing



Kirit Patel with his award for Technology Practice of the Year

in SOCT coherence tomography. 'This equipment is good for diagnosing macular problems, and we cannot always see the depth of problems with a fundus camera,' Patel explains. 'This information will also be of use when we refer people on, it makes it easier for specialists to treat them.'

The practice has also embraced the capabilities of the internet. Patient records with accompanying images are now

transferred electronically to specialists upon referral and all patient record cards are scanned into and stored on a practice database, so there are two copies at all times. There are now plans to upgrade the practice website to allow patients to order their lenses.

'We are also looking into a programme that will allow patients to shop for a pair of spectacles at home,' Patel says. 'The programme will allow people to use a photograph of themselves and to "try" frames on over it. They will be able to see how the frames would look on them.'

This alone was impressive enough, but what really clinched the decision for the judges was the number of testimonials from patients about Patel's excellent clinical practice. This included not only patient letters of gratitude for the services they had received, but perhaps more importantly for this category, testimonials from other eye care professionals such as ophthalmologists thanking Patel for the excellent clinical data that had helped them in the subsequent management of their patients. It was a combination of both state of the art technology and evidence of it being put to good use in patient management that finalised the decision.

'We decided a long time ago to invest in technology, and we are beginning to reap the rewards. The equipment we have is keeping us very busy,' Patel says. 'I think I felt a mixture of surprise and elation at winning the award as I've never won anything like this before.'

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