

Government continues to slap families in the face

The British Dental Association (BDA) has lamented the latest increase in NHS patient charges, stressing the hike will not put a penny in the cash-strapped service, and is merely covering for government cuts.

Charges in England will rise by 4% from 1 April 2024. This will mean the cost of a Band 1 treatment, such as a check-up, will increase from £25.80 to £26.80, a Band 2 such as a filling will increase from £70.70 to £73.50, and a Band 3 e.g. dentures will increase from £306.80 to £319.10.

Polling conducted by YouGov for the BDA last year found nearly a quarter (23%) of respondents in England delayed or went without NHS dental treatment for reasons of cost; 45% said the price shaped the choice of treatment they opt for. Entitlements to free care are limited, with many Universal Credit recipients not being eligible.

The BDA has long warned of the Government's long-term strategy of using

charges as a substitute for meaningful state investment. NHS dentistry's budget has been effectively static at around £3 billion for the best part of a decade, with patient charges forming an ever-greater share of the total pot until COVID. Direct Government spend on dentistry was lower as the country headed into the pandemic than it was in 2010. The collapse in patient numbers at lockdown required Ministers to increase their contributions to maintain the viability of the service. Last year's 8.5% hike saw the return to a fatally flawed 'business as usual' model as far as funding is concerned.

The recent NHS dentistry Recovery Plan claimed to offer £200 million in investment. The BDA now understands that none of this is 'new' money, but is based on recycling vast underspends, the result of practices struggling to hit their punitive contractual targets.

The Welsh Government has not adopted the same strategy as England. The BDA has

demanded that Ministers explain to the English public why they are expected to pay over £100 more for treatments like dentures than their Welsh cousins. Over 170,000 people have joined a joint petition calling for fair funding and real reform of NHS dentistry in England in a month.

Shawn Charlwood, Chair of the BDA's General Dental Practice Committee said: 'This latest hike is another slap in the face for hard-pressed families across England. [It] won't put a penny in to bring NHS dentistry back from the brink. The Government is asking the public to pay more for less of a service.'

'Ministers need to explain why patients in England are expected to pay £100 more than their Welsh cousins for identical NHS treatment.'

'The answer is very simple. Ministers are simply covering for cuts.'

BARDES Scientific Day explores innovations in dental education

The annual British Alliance of Researchers in Dental Education and Scholarship (BARDES) Scientific Day, hosted by the University of Glasgow under the esteemed Presidency of Dr Vivian Binnie ably assisted by Dr Alison Cairns, brought together leading minds in dental education and scholarship for a day of insightful discourse and collaborative exploration.

The event kicked off with a special pre-conference workshop tailored for novice researchers in dental education, setting the tone for an inclusive and engaging experience. Participants were provided with valuable guidance and resources to navigate the intricate landscape of research in this field.

The highlight of the day was the captivating keynote presentations by distinguished speakers. Professor Luke Dawson from the University of Liverpool delivered a thought-provoking talk titled 'I've got 51%, now let me treat your mother!' which delved into the nuances of clinical education decision-making and the impact on perceived



The BARDES Executive Committee 2023–2024 (left to right) Mr Elliot Adderton, Dr Melanie Nasseripour (President-elect), Dr Vivian Binnie (President), Professor Barry Quinn (Immediate-Past President), Professor Janice Ellis (Past-President), Dr John Linden, Dr Francesca Mullan, Dr Alison Cairns and Professor Luke Dawson

patient care. Dr Caitlin Bentley from King's College London presented on 'Embracing AI within dentistry education: Pathways to responsible AI education', shedding light on the transformative potential of artificial intelligence in dental pedagogy while emphasising ethical considerations.

The programme continued with a series of interactive workshops and poster presentations showcasing cutting-edge research and innovative practices in dental

education. Attendees had the opportunity to exchange ideas, network with peers, and gain valuable insights into emerging trends and best practices in the field.

As the day drew to a close, participants left inspired and empowered, armed with new knowledge and perspectives to enhance their contributions to the advancement of dental education and scholarship. The success of the BARDES Scientific Day built on the previous year hosted by Professor Barry Quinn at the University of Liverpool, underscoring the importance of collaboration and continued exploration in driving innovation and excellence in dental education.

Looking ahead, the BARDES community eagerly anticipates the next scientific meeting, which will be hosted by King's College London in November 2024. More details about the event will follow, but interested individuals are encouraged to visit the BARDES official website at <https://bardesofficial.com> for updates and information.