

The BDJ News section accepts items that include general news, latest research and diary events that interest our readers. Press releases or articles may be edited, and should include a colour photograph if possible. Please direct your correspondence to the News Editor, Liane Voisey at the BDJ, 64 Wimpole Street WIG 8YS or by e-mail to bdj@bda-dentistry.org.uk

Top brass dentists

Forget drilling and filling, these dentists have been nominated for putting smiles on their patients' faces. A report in *The Independent* newspaper recently featured ten leading dentists in Britain, all chosen by their peers.

The illustrious list includes (1) Margaret Seward, Chief Dental Officer for England; (2) Raman Bedi, Head of the National Centre for Transcultural Oral Health at University College London and president of the British Society for Disability and Oral Health; (3) Sue Greening, Community dentist in Cwmbran, Gwent, providing and co-ordinating care for people with special needs, in mobile units and at schools



Margaret Seward is dentist's favourite in poll.

and day centres; (4) Iain Hutchison, Consultant oral and maxillofacial surgeon at St Bartholomew's and the Royal London Hospital; (5) Anthony Kravitz, the longest serving member of the board of the British Dental Association and chairman of its General Dental Services Committee, the dentists' negotiating body; (6) Geoff Newman, founder of the charity Dentaaid, which sends refurbished Western dental equipment to the developing world; (7) Nigel Pitts, honorary consultant in dental public health and director of NHS Scotland's Dental Health Services Research Unit at Dundee University, and director of the university's Centre for Dental Innovations; (8) Christopher Potts, clinical director for Boots Dental-care, which has 56 practices throughout the UK and employs more than 700 professional staff; (9) John Renshaw, Chairman of the British Dental Association's executive board, who is leading an attempt to revive failing NHS services; (10) Nairn Wilson, President of the General Dental Council and Dean of Guy's, King's and St Thomas'.

Honour for the new Regent in the Court



Sir Ian Gainsford was recently installed as a Regent in the Court of Regents of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh. This is the first time that a dentist has been honoured in this way. Above photograph shows Sir Ian Gainsford (above left) with the President of the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh Professor John Temple.

HIV patients seek better dental care

People with HIV are demanding better treatment from dentists. After reports of unacceptable discrimination and poor practice by dentists, the Terrence Higgins Trust launched a campaign during National Smile Week (14-20 May 2002) to highlight the responsibilities of dentists and the rights of patients with HIV.

A recent survey carried out by the Trust found that 40% of people with HIV claim to have experienced discrimination at the hands of a healthcare professional. According to the Trust, the experiences of people with HIV include outright refusal of service; insistence on treating at the end of

the day for 'extra sterilisation procedures'; persistently putting people with HIV to the end of operating lists (and thus effectively never operating on them); writing 'HIV' in large letters on the front of patient records.

Lisa Power, head of policy and campaigns at Terrence Higgins Trust said that dentists should treat all patients with equal care and safety, because many people are unaware that they have a transmissible condition. The Disability Discrimination Act states that it is illegal to discriminate against people who are ill through HIV, either in the workplace or in the delivery of services.

Storm in a tippee cup

The British Dental Health Foundation have responded to concerns about its accreditation of a the children's drinking cup Tommee Tippee Easiflow. This follows remarks by Mandy Haberman, designer of a competing product to the Tommee Tippee cup, concerning the Foundation's approval process.

The BDHF argued that they do not recommend one product over another and

that the rigorous accreditation criteria and use of the 'British Dental Health Foundation Approved' symbol on packaging simply serve to offer reassurance about product safety and quality.

The BDHF say that any attempt to associate it with 'charities selling their names and logos to food companies that use them to make dubious health claims' is entirely misleading.



Fig. 1. The Helena Goldie Hospital in Munda is run by the United Church of the Solomon Islands.



Fig. 2. The dental team are thrilled with the new equipment.

Solomon Island dentists say goodbye to torch-light surgery

Dentaid recently provided much-needed equipment for a dental clinic in the Solomon Islands, on the far side of Australia. The crate was offloaded and moved to the Helena Goldie Hospital in Munda, Western Province, which is run by the United Church of the Solomon Islands. Government funding for their two hospitals and clinics had ceased following the ethnic violence in 2000. When the installation was complete final checks were made to check that all was in good working order. Dentist Dr Parfaite is pleased

with the range of hand tools that have been included and the quality of the laboratory equipment. She says it will all help to make her prosthetics work much easier. Dr Parfaite had, up until then, been working using a torch as an operating light, and making dentures on her stove at home using a portable slow handpiece, the only one her surgery possessed.

Dentaid has similar requests from Cameroon, Sudan, Guatemala, Kenya and Nepal, all of which require funds in place before we can proceed.

Deanery embraces distance learning

The Newcastle Deanery, which covers the North East of England, is the first post-graduate dental deanery in the country to use new technology to provide a dedicated in-practice Learning Station training and education facility to serve the entire dental team. The Learning Station concept was developed by Redbus CPD to provide dental practices with both high quality, academically-endorsed distance learning

material and the means to access it.

The package includes access to 45 hours of verifiable CPD programmes; including interactive programmes produced in partnership with The Eastman Dental Institute, events programmes made in collaboration with the *BDJ* and five titles from keep-up-to-date.tv's patient programme library which are endorsed by The British Dental Health Foundation.

Women dentists to 'keep in touch'

A new scheme, offering dentists £350 a year to keep in touch with dental practice and continue professional development during career breaks, was launched recently by Health Minister Hazel Blears, at a conference exploring better opportunities for women dentists.

Many female dentists take career breaks, for example to look after their children, and research indicates that 64 per cent of these women ultimately intend to return to the dental workforce. However, loss of confidence and feeling out of touch with the profession are cited by women as obstacles to return.

Keeping up contact with the profession through such a scheme should make returning to dental practice easier. There are almost a third more women in the General Dental Service today, compared with five years ago and 60 per cent more compared with ten years ago. This year half of all new students to enter dental school are female and by 2005 more women than men will be graduating from dentistry for the first time.

The new scheme offers each participating dentist the following: a £350 annual allowance; access to one-to-one career advice and support; free access to continuing dental education courses; free distance learning material; and flexibility – dentists planning breaks of less than one year are eligible to join the scheme.

The 'Keeping in Touch' scheme will ensure that dentists on career breaks still have contact with the profession and its developments, as well as access to good quality courses to help them update their skills.

Dangers of mercury in dentistry

A study suggests that dentists may be at risk of developing kidney and memory problems because of their exposure to mercury. Mercury is used safely in restorations but long-term exposure can cause serious health problems.

The study by researchers at the University of Glasgow suggests that dentists may be at particular risk. As mercury exposure at higher levels is known to cause similar health effects, an association cannot be ruled out. Dr Ewan Macdonald and his colleagues from the University of Glasgow found that dentists had higher levels of mercury in their bodies, compared with a sample group of academics.

They also found that dentists were significantly more likely to report kidney disorders and memory disturbances than the academic staff. The authors stopped short of making a direct link, but have reported that as mercury exposure at higher levels is known to cause similar health effects an association cannot be ruled out.

Researchers obtained urine, hair and nail samples from 180 dentists in the west of Scotland and 180 academics from the University of Glasgow. Levels of mercury were four times higher on average among dentists compared with academics. The levels were found to be strongly associated with the number of hours worked, the number of fillings handled and the number

of fillings they had themselves. While the mercury concentrations were high, just one of the dentists had levels in excess of health and safety recommendations. Nevertheless, dentists were 10 times more likely to have sought medical treatment for kidney disorders and three times more likely to have experienced fertility problems. They were also more than twice as likely to have suffered from memory disturbances.

The authors called for more research to be carried out and for dental surgeries to be monitored to ensure staff are not exposed to high mercury concentrations. Dr Dianna Echeverria, from Battelle Center for Public Health Research and Evaluation in Seattle, said more research was needed. She said the study had failed to compare like with like and would have been better if it had included dentists who were not exposed to mercury in their work. She said a more uniform dental population needs to be evaluated.

A BDA spokesperson said that it is interested to see the results of this research, albeit on the basis of a small sample of dentists. It suggested dentists could limit their exposure to mercury by wearing gloves, ensuring good ventilation in rooms, take steps to minimise the risk of spills and cleaning instruments and equipment thoroughly. The BDA also recommends regular testing of clinical staff.

UK dental laboratory survey

The UK Dental Laboratories Association (DLA) annual industry survey report reveals major findings such as volume growth in the last year in the UK (mirroring trends in Europe, North America and Pacific Rim countries), derived in the main from restorative products and implants.

Turnover per technician in NHS laboratories in the last year is in the range of £28,000 to £32,000 per annum. The comparative figure for laboratories with predominantly private work is £60,000 to £65,000 per annum. The dental laboratory sector is very fragmented. The average size of firms remains small.

Fewer firms will continue to provide a full range of services medium term. Lab-to-lab work will inevitably increase. Improving logistics will also accelerate the trend to relocate laboratories away from the more expensive parts of the country such as London and the South East.

The greatest problem for all laboratories, NHS and private, is finding compe-

tent staff. Consequently premium rates for trained and experienced technicians are increasing. Mirroring trends in the US, highest premium rates are paid to crown and bridge specialists and ceramists.

These trends are set to continue because there are insufficient numbers of trained technicians able to support the increasing volumes of private work. Medium term therefore, more importing is an inevitable consequence.

The greatest technical challenges faced by laboratories in the UK are meeting production deadlines, and difficulties caused by dentists' vague prescriptions and inadequate preparatory work. A smaller number experienced difficulties with new materials and equipment.

In summary any new investment in the sector is likely to be limited to laboratories that provide predominantly private work. The survey found that lab owners believe that concerns over the quality of NHS may well in due course undermine the confidence of the consumer/patient.

DIARY

July 2002

Irish Society for Disability and Oral Health
Conference on Special Needs Dentistry

Date: 04.07.02

Venue: Dublin Dental Hospital

Contact: Professor June Nunn, Dublin
Dental Hospital, Lincoln Place, Dublin 2.

Tel: +44 (01)6127303

E-mail: isdh@eircom.net

September 2002

European Association for Cranio-
Maxillofacial Congress 2002

Date: 03.09.02–07.09.02

Venue: Münster, Germany

Contact: Ariane Minarik, ABC Congress
Service, Arberstr. 18, D-81679,
München.

Tel: +49 (0)189 23115015

Fax: +49 (0)189 263167

E-mail: ABC-Congr-Service@t-online.de

BDA/MDDUS 2002 Scottish Young Dentist
Conference

Date: 06.09.02–07.09.02

Venue: Dunblane Hilton Hydro

Contact: Fiona Angus, Deputy Scottish
Secretary, 4 Atholl Place, Perth
PH1 5ND.

Tel: +44 (0)1738 441 040

Fax: +44 (0)1738 441042

E-mail: f.angus@bda-dentistry.org.uk

British Society of Paediatric Dentistry 50th
Annual Scientific Meeting

Date: 11.09.02–14.09.02

Venue: University of Sheffield

Contact: Dr Helen Rodd, Department of
Child Dental Health, School of Clinical
Dentistry, Clarendon Crescent, Sheffield,
S10 2TA.

Tel: +44 (0)114 2717885

Fax: +44 (0)114 271 7843

E-mail: h.d.rodd@sheffield.ac.uk

European Festival of Oral Science Joint
Meeting of the IADR

Date: 25.09.02–28.09.02

Venue: Cardiff, Wales

Contact: PEF Conference Secretariat,
World Trade Center, Cardiff International
Arena, Mary Ann Street, Cardiff, CF10
2EQ, Wales.

Tel: +44 (0)2920 232322

E-mail: PEF0FIADR@global-
meeting.co.uk

Website: www.global-meeting.co.uk

New funding for rural dentists

A £1 million incentive fund to bring more NHS dentists into remote and rural parts of Scotland has been unveiled recently.

There will be £3,000 "golden hellos" for all newly qualified dentists taking up substantive posts in rural Scotland. Grants of up to £10,000 will go to existing dentists who establish vocational training practices and offer places to those qualifying this summer.

Mary Mulligan, Deputy Health Minis-

ter, said the aim was to improve dental services in areas including Orkney, Shetland, the Western Isles, Highlands, Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, Grampian, and Lomond and Argyll.

Alastair MacLean, Scottish secretary of the British Dental Association, welcomed the initiatives. He said that the BDA would regard this as a first step in addressing increasingly acute dental workforce shortages.

Successful NVQ dental nurses

Dental nurse trainees in Leeds became the first in the country to be presented with the full NVQ level 3 qualification in dental nursing.

The School of Dental Nursing at Leeds Dental Institute presented newly-qualified trainees with certificates for level 2 in oral health care support workers and level 3 in dental nursing recently.

The trainees commenced in September 2000, four trainees gained both level 2 and level 3, six trainees gained level 2 and will complete level 3 in June this year. In May this year a further, 66 students, both full-time and part-time will undertake the level

3 independent assessment and hopefully obtain the NVQ level 3 dental nurse qualification.

The new course has been hard work for tutors, assessors and trainees. The NVQ has been well received in general dental practice with support from the dentists and work based staff providing witness statements for procedures. Interest has been shown in further training for work based assessors in the Yorkshire region. The School of Dental Nursing will offer new courses to commence later in the year for the NVQ level 3 and also assessor awards.



Hull Group enjoys further growth

James Hull Associates have announced its latest 'specialist practice' acquisition following the purchase of the Parade Dental Surgery & Implant Clinic in Cardiff.

Gareth Jenkins (Chairman of the Association of Dental Implantology and President of the British Academy of Aesthetic Dentistry) will continue practicing at the

surgery following the acquisition. This acquisition reinforces the James Hull Associates strategy to create a national network of dental specialists supported by the growing number of James Hull branded practices.

The Parade will add approximately £2 million of annualised turnover to the Group.