

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.

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DENTISTRY FUNDING TO BE RING-FENCED UNTIL 2011 AND GRADUATES TO TRAIN IN AREAS OF GREATEST NEED, MINISTER ANNOUNCES

Funding to primary care trusts (PCTs) for dental services will continue to be ring-fenced until 2011, health minister Ann Keen has announced. The extension of the ring fencing, originally planned to end in 2009, was announced on the eve of Ms Keen's appearance before the Health Select Committee's dental services inquiry this month.

At the same time Ms Keen (right) announced measures to concentrate vocational training places in areas of greatest need. Forty dentists graduating next year will be allocated vocational training places in Yorkshire, the North West, the South West and South Central. The 170 dentists graduating every year from 2010 will also be allocated places according to where demand is greatest.

'Vocational training will be targeted in those areas of the country where NHS dentists are in highest demand as part

of our commitment to improving nationwide access and improving oral health,' Ms Keen said.

The Government is also considering extending vocational training to two years. 'The measure would help tackle poor access and is expected to be welcomed by dentists,' according to the statement from the Department of Health.

Speaking to the Health Select Committee, Ms Keen said ring-fenced funding was being extended to ease major shifts in services. On commissioning she said: 'There's very strong evidence that some PCTs need much more support'

Chief Dental Officer Barry Cockcroft said 'There is no workforce shortage but the pace at which PCTs are commissioning services is disappointing.'

Teresa Perchard, policy director of the Citizens Advice Bureau, told the committee that parts of the country, such as the



South West and North West were 'dental deserts' where access was particularly poor. Bureaux in England and Wales had dealt with 6,260 queries related to dentistry in 2006/07 and a third of these concerned access, she said.

GDC TO INVESTIGATE ALLEGATIONS OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST OVERSEAS QUALIFIED DENTISTS

The GDC has agreed to investigate allegations of unfair treatment of dentists qualified outside the EU, following questions raised at this month's council meeting.

Speaking in the part of the meeting reserved for questions from the public, Owen South, a local government officer, said overseas qualified dentists were being 'misled and bullied' and the examination system appeared to be manipulated, 'setting them up to fail'.

Mr South, whose wife is a dentist who qualified in Russia, said the International Qualifying Exams for overseas candidates were being concentrated at the Eastman Dental Institute, which had a higher failure rate than other examination centres in England and Scotland.

He also said the GDC was dismissive in its treatment of candidates' dossiers explaining their qualifications and experience. 'I must ask, is the GDC putting vested interests before the

interests of patients?' he said. 'Unable to stop the large influx of EU dentists, are you using various unfair tactics to block those who qualified outside the EU, many of them British citizens?'

The GDC agreed to investigate and make a written report to a future council meeting. GDC President Hew Mathewson said: 'We have never set out to compensate for a surplus of graduates. What we do is legal and correct but may not be fair.'

Council member Michael Martin said an investigation was vital. 'It is so important as an institution to be seen as transparent.'

CHURCHILL DENTURE LETTER UP FOR SALE

A letter from Sir Winston Churchill written to his dentist, Sir Wilfred Fish was due to go up for sale at Bonhams this week (March 18). It was expected to fetch £600–£800.

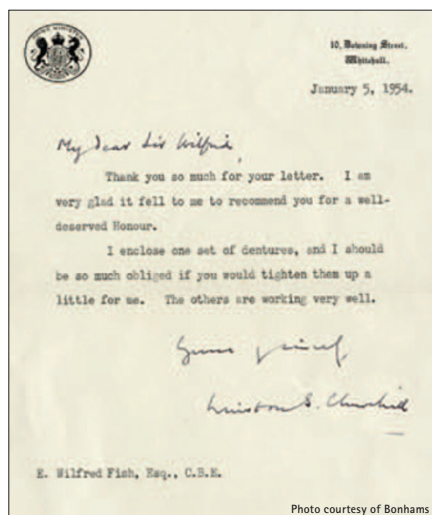
In the letter, typewritten from Downing Street in 1954, Sir Winston tells the newly-knighted Fish (below right) how pleased he was to recommend him for the honour and asks him to tighten up an enclosed set of dentures.

Churchill suffered from dental problems for most of his life, losing several teeth in his 20s, and well fitting dentures were a matter of concern for him. These

dentures were designed by Wilfred Fish and manufactured by Derek Cudlipp.

Fish, an active researcher and one of the most eminent dentists of his generation, became the first President of the General Dental Council in 1956 and held the post until 1964. He died in 1974.

Fish was also Dean of the Faculty of Dental Surgery at the Royal College of Surgeons, where the Hunterian museum now houses one of Churchill's dentures. Donated by Mr Cudlipp, the denture, worn by Churchill during the Second World War, is made from a cast gold plate with platinum clasps holding porcelain tooth facings.



FEWER DENTISTS DOING MORE NHS WORK, RECENT NASDA ACCOUNTANTS' SURVEY REVEALS

In the first year of the new contract dentists' income from NHS work increased slightly, according to a national survey of 1,000 dentists in 500 practices by the National Association of Specialist Dental Accountants (NASDA).

The survey, based on tax returns, showed that fee income per dentist went from £185,800 per dentist in 2006 to £191,780 in 2007. Private earnings also rose, with the total private fee income per dentist increasing from £231,624 in 2006 to £235,175 in 2007.

The research by NASDA, which comprises 36 accountants representing 4,000 dentists across the UK, also showed a reduction in NHS practice expenses. The average spend on dental laboratory bills was down from 7.5 per cent in 2006 to 6.9 per cent last year.

The rate of Units of Dental Activity in the NASDA survey ranged from a top value of £34.97 to £15.01.

Commenting on the findings, a NASDA spokesman said: 'We are surprised that overall NHS incomes have been maintained. We think dentists who are committed to the service are picking up more work as other dentists leave the NHS. There are fewer dentists doing more NHS work.'

The research showed that net profit per principal continues to be higher in practices with one or more associates, than for single handed dentists. In practices with one or more associates the net profit per principal rose from £145,034 in 2006 to £153,375 last year. The corresponding figures for single handed principals were £114,310 in 2006 and £122,291 in 2007.

Associate gross incomes have decreased, with the average fee income having gone down from £84,308 in 2006 to £82,864 last year.

PCTS MUST SET SMOKING CESSATION TARGETS, SAYS NICE

Primary care trusts should aim to treat at least five per cent of their population who smoke each year, according to new advice from the National Institute of Clinical Excellence.

The guidance, aimed at all professionals who have a role in helping people give up smoking, also advises that NHS stop smoking services should target minority ethnic and socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. Twenty-four per cent of people aged 16 and over in England smoke'

Nicotine replacement therapy, varenicline or bupropion are recommended as treatment options for people who are planning to give up, alongside proven behavioural counselling and group therapy.

But varenicline or bupropion should

not be offered to young people under 18, or to pregnant or breastfeeding women, NICE advises.

Nicotine replacement therapy may be used for young people over 12 'who show clear evidence of nicotine dependence' as part of a supervised regime, it says.

Professor Peter Littlejohns, NICE clinical and public health director, said: 'Smoking is still the main cause of preventable morbidity and premature death in England. We are asking all PCTs, strategic health authorities and commissioners to make it a priority to help people quit smoking.'

The guidance on best provision of smoking services with particular reference to manual groups, pregnant smokers and hard to reach communities can be found at www.nice.org/PH010.

ORTHODONTIST WINS HIGH COURT BATTLE OVER CONTRACT

Orthodontist Eddie Crouch, pictured with his wife Jane, has won a high court battle over a termination clause in his contract with South Birmingham Primary Care Trust (PCT). Dr Crouch said: 'I am delighted and relieved that I may now have a contract which means something.'

At a two-day hearing in the High Court in London last month, Mr Justice Collins ruled that the PCT had acted beyond its powers in specifying that Dr Crouch's personal dental services contract could be terminated at any time.

But the judge rejected Dr Crouch's claim that the NHS should have consulted the public over the new dental contracts introduced in April 2006. Dr Crouch, secretary of Birmingham local dental committee, argued that patients were being let down by the new contracts. Dr Crouch, who provides orthodontic treatment at two practices in Birmingham, said: 'Since the introduction of the contract I have gone from no waiting list to having 700 people on the list.'

In the first year of the contract he had been unable to treat any new patients because of the funding arrangements, he argued. The judge said both sides should pay their own costs.

Dr Crouch, a founder member of Challenge, a pressure group established by general dental practitioners in October 2006, to highlight the effects of the new contract, said his total legal costs amounted to £60,000, about £45,000 of which would be funded by donations he



had received from dentists. He believed South Birmingham was the only PCT to have included this termination clause in its PDS contracts.

During the hearing Mr Justice Collins commented on complexity of regulations for dentists. 'It's like going through a marsh, trying to leap from tussock to tussock. I do pity those poor dentists who have to struggle with this kind of rubbish,' he said.

In a statement on the judgement, South Birmingham PCT did not comment on the termination clause ruling, but said of the judge's second finding:

'The judgement confirms that South Birmingham PCT acted lawfully in the way it commissioned dental services.'

The BDA welcomed the High Court's ruling on the termination clause in Dr Crouch's contract. 'The BDA is delighted that Eddie Crouch won his case against the unreasonable term in his PDS contract with South Birmingham PCT,' said Peter Ward, BDA Chief Executive.

'The PCT amended the Department of Health's model to give it the right to terminate his contract for no cause at any time, and on a period of notice that it could determine,' he said.

EFFECTS OF AXING REGISTRATION OVERSTATED, SAYS CHIEF DENTAL OFFICER

The effects of ending patient registration have been exaggerated for political purposes, according to Chief Dental Officer Barry Cockcroft.

Appearing at a Health Select Committee hearing on dental services this month, Dr Cockcroft said that patient registration was not essential for providing patients with continuity of care. 'I think continuity of care has been exaggerated for political reasons,' Dr Cockcroft told the committee.

Patient registration was introduced

in 1990 and abolished as part of the Government's 2006 dental reforms.

Dr Cockcroft, who practised as a dentist for 27 years, rejected a claim by Anthony Halperin, Chair of the Patients Association, that registration was 'vital' for continuity of care.

Dr Halperin, a dentist, said: 'Patients do care about seeing the same dentist and ongoing registration is vital. Under the new arrangements seeing a dentist is like going into a supermarket and starting all over again.'

But Dr Cockcroft argued that ongoing relationships did not depend on registration. 'I practised for 15 years when there was no registration and my patients still regarded me as their dentist,' he said.

Health Select Committee member Sandra Gidley (Liberal Democrat, Romsey), suggested that registration had been abandoned so that the Government could fulfil its manifesto pledge that everyone could have access to an NHS dentist.

DIARY

APRIL

The Eastman at 60 anniversary conference

Date: April 3-4 2008
Venue: Eastman Dental Institute and Hospital, London
www.eastman60.org.uk

International Dental Exhibition and Meeting

Date: April 4-6 2008
Venue: Suntec Singapore International Convention and Exhibition Centre
Email: k.deicke@koelnmesse.de
www.idem-singapore.com

Welsh Hospital Group dental specialty meeting

Date: April 17 2008
Venue: Vale of Glamorgan Hotel, Cardiff
Email: pam.wooton@nglam-tr.wales.nhs.uk

BDA seminar: Dental implants for GPs and their teams

Date: April 18 2008
Venue: BDA, London
Tel: 020 7563 6880
Email: m.hatlestad@bda.org

Dental clinical skills course: handpiece control for precise preparation

Date: April 18 2008
Venue: Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh
Tel: 0131 527 1621
Email: dental@rcsed.ac.uk

Essential CPD for the Dental Team

Date: April 19 2008
Venue: Royal Society of Medicine, London
Tel: 020 7290 3946

History of Dentistry Research Group Dental detective – finding clues from the past

Date: April 21 2008
Venue: Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons, Glasgow
Email: m.watt@dental.gla.ac.uk

CHIEF DENTAL OFFICER PLEDGES TO PLUG THE GAPS

Chief Dental Officer Barry Cockcroft has pledged that everyone who wants an NHS dentist will get one. On a visit to Peninsula Dental School in Plymouth last month, Dr Cockcroft said that while he could not specify a date, 'all the basics were in place' to deliver a full NHS dental service to anyone who needs it.

'All the things that were missing previously – the dental workforce, the money, are now there, and the extra 11 per cent funding we are putting in from April,' he said.

'It will take longer in some areas than others but certainly all the basics are there now to deliver a really functioning fully comprehensive NHS dental service for anybody who needs it.'

Peninsula Dental School, which received its first 64 students in September, offers a four-year, graduate only

course with a strong emphasis on teaching in the community.

Commenting on his visit, Dr Cockcroft said: 'Having met members of the first cohort of students, I am heartened that we are encouraging the right people to the profession, to ensure that we produce the best calibre, home grown dentists for the future.'

Dr Cockcroft (left) is pictured with student Nicholas Leakey, Deputy Chief Dental Officer Tony Jenner, and Liz Kay, Dean of Peninsula Dental School.

Giving evidence to the Health Select Committee's inquiry into dental services this month (March), Teresa Perchard, policy director of the Citizens Advice Bureau, said the South West and North West regions of England were 'dental deserts' where access was particularly poor. Extra investment should be targeted on these regions, she said.



FEWER SEEN BY NHS DENTISTS, GOVERNMENT STATISTICS REVEAL

Fewer patients have been seen by NHS dentists following the introduction of the new contract, according to figures released by the NHS Information Centre.

The statistics, published last month, show that in the 24 months leading up to September 2007 a total of 27.6 million patients in England were seen by an NHS dentist – equivalent to 54.4 per cent of the population. This is 500,000

fewer patients than were seen in the 24 months leading up to the end of the old dental contract on March 31 2006, when 28.1 million patients were seen, equivalent to 55.8 per cent of the population.

There are wide variations in the percentage of adults seen by NHS dentists in different strategic health authorities (SHAs), ranging from 39.6 per cent in

South Central SHA to 59 per cent in North East SHA. In four of the 10 strategic health authority areas under half of the adult population have seen an NHS dentist in the last 18 months.

In the 24 months to the end of September 2007, 7.7 million children were seen by NHS dentists in England – equivalent to 70.3 per cent of the under-18 population.