

GDC DEFEATED BUT ARF HIKE FOR DENTISTS STANDS

In a landmark judgement on 18 December 2014, the General Dental Council (GDC) was found to have acted unlawfully on setting professional fees.

The British Dental Association (BDA) initiated Judicial Review proceedings to prevent the regulator implementing a £15 million increase to the fees levied on the dental profession. The consultation behind the annual retention fee (ARF) rise has been deemed unlawful, but the judge declined to reverse the fee rise for dentists, their counsel citing the risk of 'administrative chaos' at the GDC.

The BDA reacts

Mick Armstrong, Chair of the BDA, said: 'We regret that it came to this, but there was so much more at stake here than just fees. We've seen patients and practitioners left in limbo for over 18 months when complaints are raised, and hearings with an average price tag of £78,000. Health professionals should not have to subsidise failure at their regulator.'

'This super-sized fee rise still stands, and now serves as a monument to the failures of health regulation. This case has revealed that a regulator, unaccountable to government, can be found to have acted unlawfully but

still walk away with its ill-gotten gains. We are now looking to the Government to act.'

The BDA has written to the Department of Health to outline the worrying implications of this case.

DCPs

Although the ARF has been increased for dentists, the fee for dental care professionals (DCPs) was reduced from £120 to £116.

The British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (BSDHT) expressed its bitter disappointment at the outcome of the Judicial Review.

BSDHT President Michaela O'Neill said: 'Throughout the process we have fully supported our dentist colleagues. Although the proposed increase in the ARF is not significant for our members, it could potentially have a severe effect on the landscape of dentistry in the UK, a strained relationship between the profession and its regulator, and a decrease in practice investment in order to pay the increased fee. [...]

'We look forward to the GDC striving to be helpful by plugging any information gaps in future consultation documents so that its membership can retain confidence in its continuing role as our regulatory body.'

DENTISTS MUST VIEW DENTISTRY AS A TEAM EFFORT

The British Association of Dental Therapists (BADT) is asking all dentists to make a New Year's resolution to view the delivery of dentistry as a team effort.

The call comes as a study predicts a sharp hike in demand for dental therapists in the next ten years. The study – from the Centre for Workforce Intelligence (CfWI) – indicates a likely steep increase in demand for dental hygienists, dental therapists, orthodontic therapists and dental nurses in the run up to 2025.¹

BADT president, Fiona Sandom, has warned that for this to work, the profession needs dentists to be 'open minded and embrace the changes within dentistry' by developing a multi-skilled dental team and delegating tasks to other members.

In a bid to support this step change, Fiona has already pledged to work towards changing the 'unfair' status quo on prescribing rights for dental therapists.

The BADT is meeting with the UK's chief dental officers early this year to discuss the 'extremely limiting' Patient Group Directions, something the BADT sees as a barrier to dental therapists carrying out their full scope of practice.

1. Centre for Workforce Intelligence. Securing the future workforce supply: Dental care professionals stocktake. October 2014. Available at: <http://www.cfwi.org.uk/publications/dental-care-professionals-stocktake/@publication-detail> (accessed January 2015).

DENTAL NURSES HELP THE HOMELESS AT CHRISTMAS

A team of dental nurses gave up their free time over the festive season to provide free dental treatment to homeless people. From 23-29 December the group of volunteers for Crisis at Christmas tended to the oral health needs of almost 400 people living on the streets taken in and cared for by the charity. They provided treatment around London inside four mobile surgery units lent by various community dental services, using sterilisation equipment provided by Henry Schein.

First time volunteer, dental nurse Egle Valeikaite, said: 'Volunteering with Crisis Christmas was one of the most memorable things I have ever done. I saw pain disappear and grateful faces appear and, rather than spending my money and going ahead with consumerism trends, I spent my time at service to others.' For further information about volunteering with Crisis at Christmas, visit www.crisis.org.uk/pages/dental-servicevolunteer.html



AN A TO Z OF ROOT CANALS

Harley Street endodontist Julian Webber has compiled the UK's first 'Rootipedia': an online glossary of terms with the aim of demystifying root canal treatment.

Rootipedia can be accessed at www.roottreatmentuk.com and is in an easy-to-navigate A-Z format compiled by a trusted source. It contains both information and advice is intended to give patients a clearer understanding of this complex treatment and easy anxiety and uncertainty.

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