

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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RECONSIDER NHS COMMITMENT CRITERIA, SAYS BDA

The BDA has called on the Scottish Health Department to reconsider criteria that deem some 30 per cent of practices providing NHS services as not committed to the NHS.

The criteria mean these practices are not eligible to receive the full general dental practice allowance or rent reimbursements from NHS Scotland.

HEALTH MINISTER TO ADDRESS LDC CONFERENCE

Health minister Ann Keen will address next month's local dental committees conference.

The conference, at Kensington Town Hall on June 13, will be chaired by Eddie Crouch, the Birmingham orthodontist who won a High Court case in February to have a termination clause in his contract with South Birmingham PCT deemed unlawful. During the two day hearing the judge, Mr Justice Collins, was critical of the complexities of dental regulations.

One motion at this year's conference, proposed by North Tyneside LDC, suggests the time has come to embrace the new contract and work with PCTs.

Another motion, proposed by Jane Ainsworth, chair of North Tyneside LDC, calls on GDCs to re-open negotiations with the Department of Health in order to agree a contract based on long-term patient registration, remuneration and capitation.

DENTISTRY INVESTMENT COMES ONSTREAM

Bristol Dental School has opened a £15 million extension to increase its student capacity by more than 50 per cent. The new development will increase student numbers from 50 to 79, and will also provide 12 new places for dental hygienist/therapist students.

Speaking at the opening on April 23, Professor Jonathan Sandy, head of the dental school, said he hoped the development would help address the 'current pressing shortages in access to dental care in Bristol and the South West.'

'Students tend to set up in practice close to where they train and, providing the wrinkles in the new contract are ironed out, Bristol and the South West can reasonably expect an increase in dental services,' he said.

Chief Dental Officer Barry Cockroft said the development, the largest undertaken at an existing dental school, was a key component of the government's £80 million programme for the expansion of dental education.

Last month also saw the opening of a

£5.5 million extension at Sheffield Dental School. The new research wing comprises laboratories, offices for research staff and postgraduate students and seminar rooms. Professor Paul Speight, Dean of the School of Clinical Dentistry, said research had increased significantly at the school in the last five years, and the new wing would also help to accommodate more undergraduate students 'as part of an effort to overcome the national shortage of dentists.'

Newcastle Dental School has also invested £1.2 million in a new sedation unit (see page 484). In Scotland the new £15 million Aberdeen Dental School (see below) is on track to receive its first students in the autumn. Students at the school, which will be restricted to graduate entry, will have tuition fees of £1,775 a year paid by the Scottish government.

Scottish public health minister Shona Robinson said the development of Scotland's third dental school should improve the recruitment of dentists in the Grampian area.



DENTAL CARE AS BASIC AS NHS SPECS SAYS LABOUR PEER

NHS dentistry is moving towards a system of free examinations and payment for treatment, similar to that operated by opticians, a Labour peer has suggested.

Speaking in a Lords debate on NHS dental services last month (April 24), Lord Desai argued that dentistry was taking a similar direction to that of optician services. 'Had John Lennon not made them popular in the mid-1960s, nobody would have chosen an NHS frame if they could afford anything better. Opticians are a combination of NHS and private: we get our eyes examined and then we spend our money buying the frame. Something similar has happened in dentistry, which we have not quite acknowledged.'

Lord Desai pointed out that unlike general medical practice, dentistry and opticians were businesses. 'NHS entitle-

ments to optical care are very basic, and the frames that one gets on the NHS are very basic,' he said. But opticians, he noted, 'have long ceased to be a subject for debate in the press.'

He added that there were 4,000 more dentists in practice than in 1997 and spending on dentistry was increasing.

Opening the debate, Lord Colwyn (Conservative), 'a semi-retired dentist with more than 40 years experience, of which 20 were in the NHS' called for more investment in dentistry and improved support for PCTs.

'If PCTs are to meet the oral health needs of their communities they must have the right resources to commission dental services successfully in terms of funding and expertise,' he said. 'It seems likely some PCTs with access problems may be adopt-

ing a narrow interpretation of their duties, focusing on spending at the level of their historic budgets, rather than a comprehensive assessment of local need.'

Lord Colwyn welcomed the decision to extend ring-fenced dentistry funding for PCTs to 2011 but said increased investment was needed. 'For too long investment in NHS dentistry failed to keep up with funding for other parts of the NHS.'

Baroness Gardner of Parkes (Conservative), a retired dentist, described the current situation as 'dire' and said people with disabilities were experiencing particular problems in accessing treatment. The pathway between community dental services and hospitals was not clearly defined, she said.

Dental tourism also needed acknowledgement, she added. 'I was sitting next to someone at breakfast in the House yesterday who was just off to have seven implants done in Hungary. He told me that to have it done here would cost £20,000, but to have it in Hungary would cost £7,000.'

Baroness Thornton (Labour) said increasing access was a priority for the government and the new system was working well. 'Lots of committed NHS dentists have realised, as the reforms have bedded down, that this is a workable system,' she said.

Mainly private dentists might be uncomfortable with the reforms because the resurgence of NHS dentistry challenged their businesses, she suggested. She cited Tower Hamlets PCT's fleet of mobile dental surgeries as particularly successful at improving access.



DEVON DENTIST WANTS TO RETURN TO NHS

A Devon dentist who left the NHS in 2006 is now hoping to return one of his three practices to the NHS.

Mark Harris, who has practised in Devon for 25 years, owns practices in Torquay, Paignton and Totnes, which have restricted NHS work to children and those on income support since 2006.

Now he has applied to Devon Primary Care Trust for a contract to provide NHS care for adults in his Totnes practice. 'I think when there isn't much

money about the best arrangement is a mixture of NHS and private work,' Dr Harris said.

The Totnes surgery opened in 2000 with an NHS contract for £333,000 but went private in 2005. Dr Harris said that if he did not win the contract he would consider selling the building which was worth £750,000.

Dr Harris and his wife Cherry, an osteopath, own a house near Grenoble and are also considering selling their UK

practices and starting again in France, 'catering for a mixture of local patients and dental tourism,' said Dr Harris.

The South West has experienced particular problems in access to NHS dentistry after 30 practices in Devon and Cornwall opted out of the NHS before the introduction of the new contract in 2006. In March Teresa Perchard, policy director of the Citizens Advice Bureau, told the Health Select Committee's inquiry into dental services that the South West and North West regions of England were 'dental deserts'.

NON-ATTENDERS COST HAMPSHIRE DENTISTS £1 MILLION

Patients in Hampshire are missing more than 2,000 appointments a month and have cost dentists £1 million in lost income since April 2006, according to a survey by Hampshire Primary Care Trust (PCT).

'We have invested in NHS dentistry in the last two years because we know local people want better access to NHS dentistry,' said Natalie Jones, lead contracting manager for primary care dental services.

'This waste of appointments prevents thousands of patients from seeing an NHS dentist. We are urging patients to make sure they attend their appointment.'

A survey of dentists providing NHS services found 56,000 appointments had been missed since April 2006. 'This is the equivalent of over eight full time dentists who could have provided much needed NHS dental services,' according to a statement from the PCT.

Missed appointments meant many dentists could not provide all the services they agreed to deliver. 'Over the last two years this has cost NHS dentists in Hampshire over £1 million and could lead to dentists choosing to become private practices instead,' the PCT warned.

PRACTICES URGED TO LIGHTEN CARBON FOOTPRINT

Health professionals must take urgent action to reduce energy consumption and make greater use of electronic communications, according to a new report on climate change.

Published by the British Medical Association last month (April), *Health professionals: taking action on climate change* urges organisations to carry out carbon audits, make more careful use of electricity, install water meters, 'communicate with other healthcare professionals and patients by email or telephone wherever possible' and 'turn down unnecessary heating and air conditioning systems'.

'As the biggest employer in the UK, and one with a considerable carbon footprint, the NHS needs to take urgent action to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions and the contribution it makes to climate change,' the report says. The NHS produces emissions equivalent to about a million tonnes of carbon dioxide each year, it warns.

The report also recommends that health professionals 'try to avoid drinking bottled water or using products with excess packaging.' It advises installing a water filter at source 'to avoid transportation of filtered bottled water for dispensers'.



DIARY

MAY

Talking Points in Dentistry

Malcolm Levinkind on paediatric dentistry and Raj Rattan on effective communication Dates:

May 12 2008, Novotel, Southampton
 May 13 2008, Ibis Hotel, Earls Court, London
 May 15 2008, Motorcycle Museum, Solihull
 May 20 2008, Airth Castle, Falkirk
 May 21 2008, The Marriott Metro, Newcastle
 May 22 2008, Elland Road Football Club, Leeds
 Tel: 01663 750450
 Order tickets online: www.talkingpoints.gsk.co.uk/apply.asp

9th Oxford Course in Evidence-Based Dentistry

Date: May 12-16 2008
 Venue: Department of Continuing Education, Oxford University
 Tel: 01865 286941
 Email: cpdhealth@conted.ox.ac.uk

GDC Dental Technician registration days

Date: May 14 2008
 Venue: Holiday Inn Plymouth
 Date: May 15 2008
 Venue: Sandy Park Conference Centre, Exeter
 Tel: 0845 222 4141
 Email: communications@gdc-uk.org

Joint Annual Conference of the UK Oral Health Research Group and the Irish Link

Date: May 15-16 2008
 Venue: Croke Park Stadium, Dublin
 Tel: 087 288 6897
 Email: mary.carr@maile.hse.ie

Annual Meeting of the European Society of Dental Ergonomics

Date: May 30-31 2008
 Venue: Desenzano del Garda, Lake Garda, Italy
 Email: secretary.esde@live.be

JUNE

Managing challenging patients

Date: June 13 2008
 Venue: Royal College of Surgeons, London
 Tel: 020 7869 6815
 Email: fdseducation@rcseng.ac.uk

Annual Conference of Local Dental Committees

Date: June 13 2008
 Venue: Kensington Town Hall, London
www.lcdcuk.org/news

114th Meeting of the American Dental Society of Europe

Date: June 19-22 2008
 Venue: Lapa Palace, Lisbon, Portugal
 Tel: +44 (0)141 331 0088

NEW SEDATION UNIT IN NEWCASTLE

A new £1.2 million dental sedation unit, capable of treating 3,000 patients a year, has opened at Newcastle Dental Hospital and School of Dental Sciences.

New referrals for intravenous sedation have increased by 25 per cent in the last two years in Newcastle. As well as providing treatment, the unit will provide hands-on training for under-

graduates and postgraduates undergoing Newcastle University's diploma in conscious sedation.

Opened by England's Chief Dental Officer Barry Cockcroft (second from left), the unit comprises five sedation surgeries, two pre-assessment rooms and a four bay recovery area. Pictured at the opening ceremony are, left to right, Robin Seymour, Dean of Dentistry, Nick Girdler, Professor of Sedation Dentistry, and Clinical Director David Jacobs.



WIN FUNDING FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Have you completed a project or scheme which demonstrates innovation and has had an impact on patient care? Or do you have an idea for one? The inaugural Dental and Oral Health Innovation Awards are looking for examples of novelty, viability and impact on patient care.

Entries, which should reach the organisers by 13 July, can be services, technologies or treatments from individuals, academic institutions or NHS trusts. They can be at any stage from concepts through to trading businesses. Shortlisted candidates will have to pitch their idea to a panel of judges in London in September

and may be given funding for their ideas.

For those who need help in preparing their entries there will be an i2 Event dental ideas and innovation conference at the Royal Society of Medicine on July 7 where legal, technical and clinical experts will be on hand to help develop your ideas. Further information is available on www.i2event.co.uk

The BDA is one of several partners working with the competition organisers, Medical Futures. Entries should be submitted via the Medical Futures website www.medicalfutures.co.uk which gives details of the terms and conditions.

BDJ'S FORMER SCIENTIFIC EDITOR DIES

Professor Malcolm (Tony) Naylor, a former scientific editor of the *BDJ*, died on April 15, aged 82. Professor Naylor, who made a major contribution to periodontology research at Guy's Hos-

pital, was appointed scientific editor in 1961 and served under three editors, an experience he described in 2004 (*British Dental Journal* 2004; 197: 725-734). He was head of periodontology and preventive dentistry at Guy's Hospital dental school from 1980-1991. An obituary will be included in a future issue of *BDJ*.