

Update on the activities of the Shirley Glasstone Hughes Trust Fund

Please send any ideas for feature articles for consideration to:
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The Shirley Glasstone Hughes Trust Fund was set up in 1990 in order to fund 'prizes or scholarships for dental research' and since 1991 it has provided grants for dental research projects. Between 2005 and 2006, the Trust reviewed the outcomes of its funding over the previous 15 years in order to assess the relevance of the output to primary dental care practice. The results of the review were published in the *BDJ* in 2007, and this article provides an update on the Trust's activities since the review was completed.

Potted history

Since 1991 the Shirley Glasstone Hughes Trust Fund has funded dental research. To date 41 research projects have been funded worth in excess of £670,000.

In 2004 the Trustees of the Fund took the decision to evaluate the quality of research output from the Trust's spending and assess just how relevant it was to dentists in everyday practice. The evaluation found that while the research funded was of scientific merit, greater efforts were needed to ensure that all future research addressed issues of direct relevance to dental practitioners.

The Trust Fund decided to focus its efforts and funds on research in primary dental care and its newly revamped website (www.dentistryresearch.org) is the means by which the Trust can fund research of real relevance to dentists out there working in practice. The Primary Care Dentistry Research Forum was developed to give dental practitioners and dental care professionals the opportunity to help direct our research agenda.

Recent activities

Since April this year, the Shirley Glasstone Hughes Trust's efforts have been focused on improving the Primary Care Dentistry Research Forum in partnership with the BDA's Web Services Team.

A decision was taken by the Trustees to procure new software for the website which would allow registrants to vote for



Fig. 1 The new website homepage

particular questions they would like to see answered with conclusive research, and enhance the website to provide much more than a discussion forum. Various improvements have now been made to the site, which has improved the general ease of use of the site and more importantly has allowed us to add fresh content to ensure that people re-visit the site.

The newly revamped website was piloted at the 2009 British Dental Conference and Exhibition held in Glasgow and the initial feedback from dental practitioners was very positive. The comments concluded that the website was 'fun', 'quick and easy to use' and 'much needed'. The website is to

be launched imminently, and in preparation for this a new web address has been set-up. The site can now be accessed via www.dentistryresearch.org (Fig. 1).

The new voting software will allow registered users to vote on existing questions and submit their own questions over a period of one month (Fig. 2). The 'question of the month' as voted for by the users of the site will be put forward for a rapid critical review. Each month new questions will be added to the site to be voted on from data collected via the BDA's Omnibus survey. The aim is still very much to encourage members of the site to think of their own questions and submit them to be included in the vote.

The website now also has a new Blog section (Fig. 3) which will be updated with fresh content every two to three weeks, along with a quick and simple registration process. To join the website and vote for a question takes less than a couple of minutes to complete. Questions submitted to the voting section are live on the site with immediate effect, which allows them to be included in the vote instantly.

Once the initial marketing push is completed, a funded PhD studentship will carry out rapid critical reviews on the 'question of the month' as voted for by practitioners and dental care professionals, in order to draw conclusions on the existing published evidence and identify gaps in knowledge. Short 'state of the art statements' on the existing evidence for the 'question of the month' will be written and published on the website in an accessible and easily digestible format.

Where there is poor or very little evidence relating to a particular 'question of the month', this question will form the basis for commissioned research. We anticipate that the first question for commissioning will be identified in the autumn.

Upcoming activity

Over the coming months efforts will be directed towards fully promoting the newly enhanced website to BDA members and the wider dental community. Work is currently underway to promote the SGH site via the BDA website, where visible promotion and links will be placed on several main areas of the site.

Within the next couple of months, articles will be published in BDA publications and the wider dental press and in future the Trust Fund will have a page dedicated to the activities of the newly revamped website in the *BDJ*.

Commissioning research

Once the marketing activities to promote the newly revamped website are well underway, we anticipate that the first call for applications will be advertised in December 2009.

The enhanced website will enable us to guide applicants through the application process by providing them with the appropriate forms and guidance notes. For the first time, applicants will be able to apply for SGH research funding online.

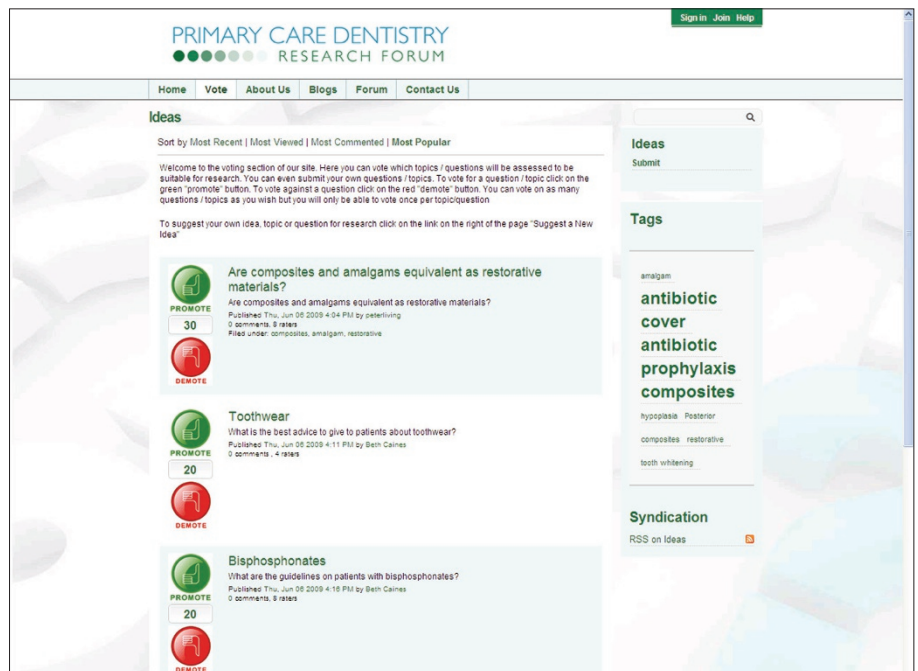


Fig. 2 The website's new 'ideas' voting tool. Top of the vote currently: 'Are composites and amalgams equivalent as restorative materials?'

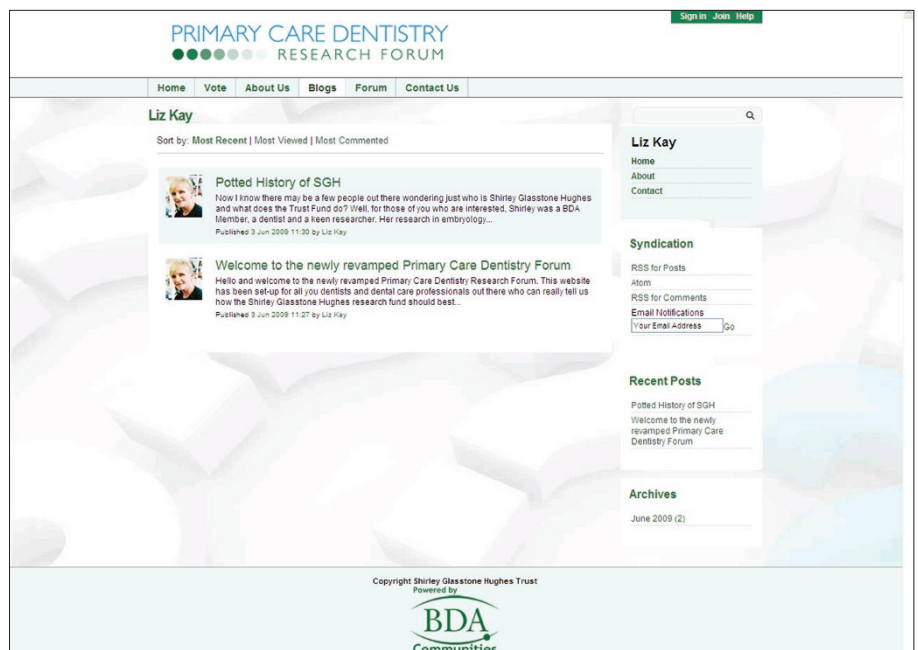


Fig. 3 The new Blog section of the website

We hope that the first round of commissioned research will be underway by March 2010.

We need your help

In order to fund high quality research of real relevance to practitioners in everyday practice, the Primary Care Dentistry Research Forum must be successful.

In order to fulfil our objectives, it is vital that dental practitioners and professionals engage with the website and indicate, by voting on the site and submitting their own

individual questions, where our research funds should be directed.

If you are interested in taking part in the vote and adding your own research questions, then please log on to www.dentistryresearch.org and join. Alternatively you can contact Beth Caines at b.caines@bda.org or 02920 496174 if you would like a question added to the vote.

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