

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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NHS REPORTS REVEAL RISING COSTS AND VARIATIONS IN ACCESS

New figures published by the NHS Information Centre highlight the increasing expense of providing dental care and the wide variation in the use of NHS dentists across the United Kingdom.

The report *Dental Earnings and Expenses, England and Wales 2008/9* shows expenses borne by dental practices escalating at a faster rate than incomes were increasing during the period it details. It also highlights an increase in the average self-employed dentist's taxable income of just £500 during the year.

The average taxable income for all self-employed primary care dentists in England and Wales in 2008-2009

was £89,600, compared to £89,100 in 2007-2008.

Practice principals saw expenses including the costs of providing the building, equipment, staff and materials rocket by 7.6% from £218,000 in 2007-2008 to £235,500 in 2008-2009.

'The Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body will clearly need to consider the issue of expenses carefully this year and the BDA will be requesting it does so,' said John Milne, Chair of the BDA's General Dental Practice Committee.

The second report, *NHS Dental Statistics for England 2009/10* showed that in the two-year period ending June 2010, a total of 28.5 million patients were seen by an NHS dentist,

an increase of 376,000 on the two-year period up to the introduction of the new contract.

The areas with the highest percentage of people who saw an NHS dentist included Great Yarmouth and Waveney (76.9%), Doncaster (73.2%) and Middlesbrough (72.4) whereas the areas with the lowest percentage included Kensington and Chelsea (23.8%) and Richmond and Twickenham (33.9%).

The report also showed that more complex, band 3 treatments carried out by dentists increased by 12.2% in 2009-2010; that the percentage of female dentists has continued to rise since 2007; and that 54.1% of dentists aged under 35 are female.

HERPES VIRUS USED TO TREAT MOUTH CANCER

Doctors have used a genetically engineered herpes virus to help treat patients suffering from mouth, neck and head cancer.

In a trial run by the Institute of Cancer Research (ICR) and The Royal Marsden NHS Foundation Trust, 17 patients were given injections of the virus, as well as being treated with chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

The cold sore virus, known as Onco VEX, was modified to multiply inside cancer cells but not in healthy ones. It would then burst and kill tumour cells, as well as releasing a human protein that would help stimulate patients' immune systems. The virus was injected into cancer-affected lymph nodes in up to four doses.

Tumour shrinkage could be seen on scans for 14 patients and over three-quarters of the participants showed no trace of residual cancer in their lymph nodes during subsequent surgery to remove them. More than two years later, over three-quarters of the patients had not succumbed to the disease.

'Around 35-55% of patients given the standard chemotherapy and radiotherapy treatment typically relapse within two years, so these results compare very favourably,' said Dr Kevin Harrington, Principal Investigator. 'This was a small study so the results should be interpreted with caution; however, the very high rates of tumour response have led to the decision to take this drug into a large scale Phase III trial.'

