Letters to the Editor

Send your letters to the Editor,
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Priority will be given to letters less than 500 words long.
Authors must sign the letter, which may be edited for reasons of space.

LETTERS

SHAME ON THE MPS

Sir, having sent off the postcard to my local MP as requested by the BDA regarding the CQC, I was eagerly awaiting the reply from the MP. Not only did I send the postcard to the MP in whose constituency my practice is, I also sent a copy as well as a detailed letter to my MP in whose constituency I live.

The first reply came in the yellow envelope and matching paper with an explanation in the normal political waffle of the aims and issues of the CQC. Well, I was not surprised at the answer from the MP. What, however, did surprise me was, when I received the second letter from my home MP, it was 100% the exact same letter as the one received from MP number one! Then only did I realise that this was a standard letter, most probably drawn up by some underling in Westminster, and then sent to all MPs to copy-and-paste onto their letterheads by one of their office workers. I am quite doubtful that any of the MPs ever read or even laid eyes on the postcard. So much for our effort and shame on the MPs for insulting our intelligence and treating us like a bunch of idiots!

So, to all my stressed and depressed colleagues out there, we all got the same copy-and-paste letter which basically tells us: nobody really cares!

J. Truter, Felixstowe and Ipswich
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BEGGARING BELIEF

Sir, it's that time of year again! Along with the joys the festive season brings, there is also the drudgery of completing tax returns, guessing what the new annual retention fee will be, and completing and returning the hours of annual CPD. This year I found out that

the CPD declaration could be submitted online, and registered, finding the security question 'how many fillings do you have?' quite humorous – considering that I had no idea!

However, what I didn't find quite so funny was to discover that in my case no hours had been entered for two consecutive years, despite the fact that I had posted them. Assuming that this was a clerical error, I contacted the GDC, only to find that the external agency involved had either not received the hours, or had not entered them. When I enquired if any system existed to contact registrants who unexpectedly suddenly stopped sending in their annual CPD returns, I was told that the onus was upon the dentist to ensure that they were submitted, and that such a system would be too expensive! This explanation from a body we pay to 'protect patients and regulate the dental team' beggars belief.

There are a significant number of registrants who do not have access to, nor wish to, submit and check their returns online, and who rely solely on the postal system. Currently the first contact from the GDC would be at the end of the five-year cycle to investigate why the registrant had not fulfilled the required amount of hours. Should a registrant not respond to the GDC's three warning letters, then the GDC would commence their investigation. This would be most stressful for any clinician or DCP, especially for those who had posted their annual returns in good faith and assumed all was well.

Paradoxically, I also discovered that we should not only keep a record of verifiable CPD for ten years, but 'be able to verify non-verifiable hours as well'! How we should do this was not explained.

To prevent an unwanted surprise at the end of your cycle, may I suggest that colleagues concerned about their returns either register to check their CPD online, or contact the GDC CPD office on 020 78873879.

G. Power, London

Gurvinder Soomal, Head of Registration at the General Dental Council responds: Thank you for the opportunity to respond to Mr Power's letter.

Continuing professional development is a legislative requirement for all dentists and DCPs to remain registered to practise. The purpose of CPD is to maintain public confidence in our registers by ensuring dentists and dental care professionals have not only acquired the qualifications needed to practise, but continually update their skills in order to give their patients the best possible treatment and care.

eGDC vs. the post

With more than 95,000 registrants (including around 38,400 dentists), gathering CPD information is a huge task and we do expect registrants to take responsibility for their own submissions. We are sorry Mr Power's experience with the postal system has not been positive. We have tried to eliminate the possibility of returns going missing en route through the development of our 24-7 online service at www.eGDC-uk.org. Accounts can be created through our main website www.gdc-uk.org. This has to be a very secure system hence the need for security questions to log on. More than 57,000 registrants have already signed up to the system.

We still cater for those who do not have access to, or do not wish to use, the online system. A declaration form and a free-post envelope are posted to all registrants at the time of their Annual Retention Fee