

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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GDC STRUGGLES AS REGISTRANT NUMBERS SOAR

For the first time, the General Dental Council (GDC) has more than 100,000 dental professionals on its registers. It reached the milestone exactly 55 years to the day since the first meeting of the GDC. As of Monday 4 July 2011 the figure stood at 100,001.

Dental nurses now make up the biggest group with more than 46,000 on the register, followed by dentists with over 38,000. The smallest registrant groups are clinical dental technicians and orthodontic therapists, with 170 and 166 registrants respectively.

The same week, the Council for

Healthcare Regulatory Excellence (CHRE) published its performance review report.

'This week's publication serves as a reminder of the importance of the GDC focusing its resources where they are needed,' said Dr Susie Sanderson, Chair of the BDA's Executive Board. 'Anxieties were raised about the GDC just two months ago when Chair Dr Alison Lockyer resigned suddenly citing unspecified concerns.'

The CHRE publication says that the difficulties the GDC is experiencing have implications for its ability to maintain the confidence of both the professions

and the public in its role as an effective regulator. It highlights particular concerns about the timeliness and quality of the GDC's responses to complaints and argues that there are significant weaknesses in the performance of the GDC's fitness to practise function. Concerns are also expressed that the GDC is focusing solely on improving the time taken for cases to progress from investigating committee to final hearing, with the report recommending that quality assurance processes are introduced urgently.

The CHRE report says that the next 12 months will be critical to the improvement of the GDC's overall performance.

GUM DISEASE INCREASES TIME TO CONCEPTION

Professor Roger Hart of the University of Western Australia told the recent annual meeting of the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology that the negative effect of gum disease on conception was of the same order of magnitude as the effect of obesity.

'Until now, there have been no published studies that investigate whether gum disease can affect a woman's chance of conceiving,' said Professor Hart, who is Professor of Reproductive Medicine as well as Medical Director of Fertility Specialists of Western Australia. 'This is the first report to suggest that gum disease might be one of several factors that could be modified to improve the chances of a pregnancy.'

Researchers followed 3,737 pregnant women and analysed information on pregnancy planning and outcomes for 3,416 of them.¹

They found that

women with gum disease took an average of just over seven months to become pregnant – two months longer than the average of five months that it took women without gum disease to conceive.

Information on time to conception was available for 1,956 women and, of these, 146 women took longer than a year to conceive – an indicator of impaired fertility. They were more likely to be older, non-Caucasian, to smoke and to have a body mass index over 25 kg/m². Out of the 3,416 women, 1,014 women (26%) had periodontal disease.

1. Hart R, Doherty D A, Newnham I A, Pennell C E, Newnham J P. Periodontal disease – a further potentially modifiable risk factor limiting conception – a case for a pre-pregnancy dental check-up? [Abstract number 0-177]. *Hum Reprod* 2011; 26(Suppl 1): i70.

PROMOTING ORAL CARE FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The British Society of Gerodontology (BSG) Oral Health Promotion Working Group has been working on a national resource to promote improved mouth care for the older person. *Promoting oral people's health: essential guide for nurses* was created in collaboration with the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) and the Department of Health.

The publication was despatched to nurses in February and promoted in the *Nursing Standard* and *Nursing Older People*.

The BSG hopes that oral health promoters will bring the publication to the attention of the Lead Nurse for their PCT and encourage it to be adopted as the Trust Policy for use on their hospital wards. Registered nurses working in nursing homes can also be encouraged to adopt the information in the guide.