

## ARF FREEZE A CHOICE, NOT A NECESSITY

The British Dental Association (BDA) has slammed the GDC's decision to keep professional fees at an historic high of £890.

The regulator's Council voted unanimously to keep the annual retention fee (ARF) unchanged, following a consultation that drew 907 responses. Council members were asked to choose between the status quo and a small reduction in the fee level to £840, an alternative which the BDA branded a 'fig leaf' cut.

BDA Chair Mick Armstrong said: 'The GDC seems determined to cling to its status as the most expensive and least effective health regulator in Britain. Certainly neither of the fee options that were on the table today ever threatened to take its crown away.'

'Starting to bring registrants' fees in line with comparable professions could have sent the clearest possible signal that lessons have finally been learned. Instead what we saw was a regulator so wedded to past mistakes that it even dispensed with fig leaf cuts.'

'The GDC's whole approach to fees is borne of choice not necessity. It is supporting a strategy and a mentality that will see the regulator continuing to operate well beyond its legal remit. We needed to see

evidence that the GDC was prepared to focus on its day job, and re-engage positively with the profession. Today proves we have a regulator incapable of delivering on needed change, and just why we have a responsibility to challenge its failed leadership and failed governance whenever we see it.'

The Faculty of General Dental Practice UK [FGDP(UK)] has also expressed its disappointment at the General Dental Council (GDC)'s decision to retain the 2015 annual retention fee (ARF) in 2016.

FGDP(UK) Dean, Mick Horton, said: 'The FGDP and other representative bodies were clear and unanimous in their rejection of retaining 2015's ARF into 2016, and we are disappointed that the GDC appears still not to be listening to the concerns of dentists and dental care professionals.'

'Dentists provide safe, good quality care and present a low risk to patients, but unfortunately have a poorly-performing regulator, which appears to be focussed unnecessarily on growing its reserves, rather than giving its Fitness to Practise processes the radical overhaul they need. The GDC has a specific remit as a regulator, and by acting outside this remit it is attempting to justify its unnecessarily high fees.'

'Having to pay fees double those of doctors, three times those of opticians and pharmacists and seven times those of nurses will do nothing to improve the Profession's confidence in the GDC, and the FGDP is concerned that in the end it may be patients who suffer as a result of the GDC's actions.'

### SUGAR TAX REPORT PUTS REAL PRESSURE ON MINISTERS FOR DECISIVE ACTION

The British Dental Health Foundation has welcomed news that MPs have backed a tax on sugary drinks in England and calls for the government to take note.

The Commons' Health Select Committee has called for an introduction of a sugar tax as part of what they describe as a 'bold and urgent' set of measures to tackle child health issues.

The committee said there was 'compelling evidence' the tax would reduce the consumption of sugary drinks and help to protect generations of children from health problems such as tooth decay and obesity.

Dr Nigel Carter OBE, Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, responded to the report: 'What we are seeing is a paradigm shift, with this report real pressure will be put on ministers who have so far resisted a tax, they cannot now ignore the fact that it will have a real and hugely positive effect on the nation's health.'

'We reiterate our long held stance that the introduction of the tax is a necessity, currently child tooth extractions due to sugar-related tooth decay are the single biggest reason for children being admitted to hospital for general anaesthetics. This cannot continue. There is a definite need for quick and decisive action and ministers have to pay attention.'

'The additional proposal to crackdown on the marketing and advertising of sugary drinks is also great news.'

The Commons' Health Select Committee Chair, Dr Sarah Wollaston, said: 'We believe that if the government fails to act, the problem will become far worse.'

'A full package of measures is required and should be implemented as soon as possible.'

### AROUND THE WORLD... IN ONE NIGHT!

#### UK

'Tis the season to be... carefree with your diet, apparently. The UK will spend over £20 billion on food and drink this Christmas. That includes the consumption of around 600 million units of alcohol. The season really does push UK sugar consumption to excessive levels. Festive favourites are packed with sugar, with an average of around 21 g in a mince pie, and 14 g in a single glass of mulled wine. Better make sure a new toothbrush is on your Christmas wish list!



#### Germany

The German Christmas markets attract tourists from all over the world during the build up to Christmas and offer a plentiful selection of sweet treats to sample as you wander through the stalls, such as 'glühwein' (mulled wine), toffee apples and stollen. A lump of coal in your stocking is certainly not as terrifying as the German punishment for being bad. 'Krampus', a horned creature, will pay you a visit and give you a birch as a present.



#### USA

Americans, on average, will consume over 7,000 calories on Christmas Day. The traditional boozy drink, eggnog, contributes a lot of that at around 400 calories per serving. However, calorie consumption has decreased in the USA in the last 10 years. This may be due to an increased consumption of diet drinks.



#### Japan

Christmas dinner in Japan is rather unconventional. Rather than turkey, many people celebrate the holiday with dinner out at... KFC! This is largely down to a very successful advertising campaign by the American fast food chain in the 1970s which suggested that fried chicken was a traditional Christmas feast.

