Crisis at Christmas Dental Service 2017

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Crisis at Christmas Dental Service (CCDS) had a fantastic festive season in 2017. The service has continued to provide high quality dental care to hundreds of people experiencing homelessness across London and in addition has piloted some exciting new initiatives.

CCDS operates from four mobile dental units based at two sites in London over a period of seven days from 23-29 December. Each year more than 100 dentists, dental nurses, dental hygienists and therapists and receptionists volunteer their time to deliver dentistry to some of the most vulnerable and seldom heard people in our society. In 2017, the doors of our mobile dental units were opened to 431 patients who received dental consultations and examinations. Of these, 317 received oral hygiene instruction, 146 had fluoride varnish application, 213 underwent scale and polishes, 174 restorations were placed and 129 teeth were extracted.

In addition to this clinical activity CCDS 2017 featured a pilot denture service led by Andrea Johnson, co-founder and chair of the Den-Tech charity. The new service provided 24 dentures to 21 patients and was very well received by patients and volunteers alike. Andrea shared her views of the new service: 'The pilot denture service provided by Den-Tech was a great success. There were 21 patients that received same-day simple dentures; this helped to restore not only the patient's function but also their aesthetics, giving them the confidence to smile again. Now that the service has been piloted and trialled the lessons learned from it will help us to improve year upon year to give the best possible service to the very deserving patients of CCDS.'

CCDS 2017 also saw the implementation of a new role, the Clinical Dental Supervisor. This role enables experienced clinicians to support more newly qualified dentists in the delivery of treatment for our vulnerable homeless patients and ensures that all dentists, no matter at what stage they are in their careers, can volunteer safely and

provide the highest standards of care. The Clinical Dental Supervisors were able to assist with complex treatment planning, challenging extractions and triaging of patients.

Undergraduate dentists were given an insight into the inner workings of the service this year. CCDS accepted a group of enthusiastic King's College Hospital and University of Bristol dental students to assist on reception and observe the service in action. Rahail and Amrita, two student volunteers, commented: 'Volunteering with CCDS was a truly unforgettable experience. A lot of people say that they chose to go to dental school because they wanted to help people and save smiles. Crisis showed us how to do that and more. Being part of the dental team was extremely humbling and gave us a chance to see what being a dentist can really mean to those who aren't able to access routine dental care. In reception we were able to talk to patients and listen to their stories, something neither of us will ever forget. It's difficult to put into words how much our time at Crisis impacted us but it's safe to say we'll be back next year!'

All this would not have been possible without the extraordinary generosity of those who donate to and sponsor the service including: Dental Protection Limited, Henry Schein, the British Dental Industry Association, TePe, GC, Schulke, Voco, Community Dental Services, King's College Community Dental Service, Kent Community Health Trust.

Follow us on Twitter @crisisdental, and if you would like to volunteer next Christmas, CCDS will be recruiting from October 2018. Please see <http://www.crisis.org.uk> for further details. ■