

This is your page to write to and open up topics for debate, reply to each other and offer advice. The letters we have for this issue cover the dental nurse NVQ and the importance of Oral Health Promoters. What are your thoughts and contributions? These can be about your profession only or about working in dentistry in general.

★ Star Letter

Oral Health Promoter speaks out

As an Oral Health Promoter who has a passion for keeping my knowledge up to date I regularly read the *BDJ* but find some of the articles have little relevance to my role within the team, so I was pleased to see the *Vital* supplement attached recently. I read it with growing delight, not only were all of the articles relevant, but the idea of a journal aimed at the whole dental team has been long awaited by those non-dentists among us and is much needed. While each profession under the umbrella title of 'PCD' produces their own very good journal, *Vital* seems to encompass the best aspects of the current thinking on collaborative methods of working with the emphasis on 'team work'. Hopefully through this publication PCDs will have a greater understanding of each other's roles ultimately helping to improve patient care.

I was however, a little disappointed to see that Oral Health Promoters appear to have been overlooked as members of the PCD team. The National Oral Health Promotion

Group has approximately 400 members, which I believe is a similar number to BADT's membership list, but while Therapist's were represented, Oral Health Promoters were not. Oral Health Promoters work predominately in Community Dental Services but in recent years are becoming more familiar figures in the team in corporate companies and high street practices. I urge you not to forget this vocal and proactive group of PCDs, if *Vital* is to be a truly inclusive 'team' journal.

Charlotte Jeavons, Senior Oral Health Promoter & PCD tutor, Enfield

Vital replies

Thanks to Charlotte for her comments. We are trying to keep all members of the dental team fully represented, but maintaining a balance may be difficult at times. We refer Charlotte and her colleagues to the article in the launch issue of Vital 'In Focus: rewarding excellence in dental patient care', which applauds the achievements of Oral Health Promotion



Pauline Jackson, Oral Health Promotion Facilitator and Dymphna McLoughlin, Oral Health Promotion Co-ordinator, Focus Awards prize winners 2003

Officers in Calderdale and Huddersfield CDS, and Oral Health Promotion Facilitators in Armagh and Dungannon, Northern Ireland. Also see our career pathways article on page 23 of this issue.

Grandparent scheme

I have never written to any magazine before, but I cannot let the comments by Miss Sue Wright go unchallenged. I am one of the nurses who will have to register under the grandparenting scheme, as I cover when we have nurses absent. Having started my dental nursing career in 1971 at the age of 16, I have worked almost continually as a dental nurse apart from the few years I was at home with my children.

I am, and have been for many years now, a practice manager responsible for the hiring

and training of many nurses at my current practice. I was instrumental in the practice gaining and keeping Denplan Excel accreditation four years ago. Anyone who is familiar with this scheme will know how detailed the annual examination of the practice and staff is, including cross infection and health and safety. I would take exception at being told to take an NVQ Examination, some of the "qualified nurses" I have employed could not clean my kitchen, never mind be responsible for the cross infection control of a surgery. Surely, if these unqualified nurses have years of experience, they have been found out by now if they

were not doing the job properly. The fact that they are still, and have been employed for many years speaks for itself. So many people fall into the trap of thinking if you don't have a piece of paper, you can't do the job.

I might add that although I have no dental nursing qualification I have plenty of qualifications in other fields including cross infection and health and safety, as the whole team at my practice believes in CPD. There are good and bad nurses in the profession Sue, but please don't only tag the latter with the unqualified ones.

Jo Redfern, Practice Manager, Somerset

Dental nurse NVQ article

Firstly, may I congratulate you on producing a much awaited informative magazine for members of the whole dental team.

Your article on the development and progress of the new NVQ Award for dental nurses I read with particular interest, having been involved with the training of dental nurses for many years. I felt that whilst in general it was correct, it gave a negative edge towards the new award and was in places slightly misleading – you don't get merits and distinctions with the NVQ exam.

We are fortunate that a local FE College has embraced the change brought about by alterations with the funding framework. They decided to provide the support to enable the transition from National Certificate to NVQ to take place, which of course I appreciate isn't and hasn't been the case in many areas around the country. They've looked at different delivery styles

and developed partnerships with employers to meet the needs of both candidate and employer.

The National Certificate may well have been around for many years but we need to move with the times. As with any new offspring we know that 'teething' problems subside and if encouraged and supported, this NVQ will emerge to become a 'permanent', valued and recognisable professional qualification for the members of our future dental teams!

Whilst I'm sure they'd be the first to admit it hasn't been an easy ride, they've faced the challenges and emerged with what I consider to be a provider of quality training for nurses in the Coventry & Warwickshire Areas wishing to gain their NVQ level 3.

Stuart Boulton
Director of Dental Public Health
Coventry Primary Care Trust

Firstly, may I congratulate you on the quality of your launch issue which I found to be full of useful information and updates.

However, I wish to take issue with your report entitled 'NVQ success in Leicester' p 08. Your report is inaccurate in that it states that "this qualification is not yet available in Leicestershire."

Leicester College has been delivering the NVQ Level 3 Oral Health Care since June 2002. Currently we have 42 candidates studying at various stages of the programme. Ten students completed in

December 2003.

The college is interviewing for a March 2004 intake of a further 15 candidates. Contrary to the opinion expressed by David Turner (p25), Leicester College currently only offers an evening course (one night per week) in an attempt to alleviate the pressure on dental practices. Clinical colleagues are invited to attend an induction programme in order to ensure team involvement and support.

Kath Payne
Programme Co-ordinator - NVQ Oral Health, Leicester

Professional vital to dentistry

I was one of the examiners at the November Dental Nurses National Examination. In an effort to put candidates at ease, I thought I would start their viva with a nice easy question. The question was, what is a PCD or what do those letters mean? Not one single candidate, male or female, was able to give me the correct answer. When I asked if they would be surprised to know that they were a PCD, they looked at me as if I was from Mars.

Is it perhaps not time to drop the unpopular name PCD and return to terminology that all of our profession understands but more importantly our patients?

James H. Hardy, Surrey

Vital comments

This letter was sent to the BDJ office in response to Vital Editor, Kate Craig's Guest Leader in the BDJ. The Vital team thought it was a valuable comment to share with readers. What do you think of the name 'PCD'? Do you feel like a PCD? If not what collective term do you think more reflects its members?

SEND YOUR LETTERS

to: the Editor, Vital,
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 64 Wimpole Street,
 London W1E 2UZ or
 email vital@bda.org.

Authors must sign the letter, which may be edited for reasons of space.

Our star letter writer will receive a Sonnet Black Laque fountain pen (£90 RRP) courtesy of Parker Pens.



Clinical questions

Do you ever come across a problem or situation at work, and wonder what everyone else does in the same situation?

This section is for your clinical quandaries and questions, and hopefully the answers or suggested solutions from other people who have had a similar problem. Don't be shy. If it is bothering you then the chances are someone else out there is asking exactly the same question. The writer of the star question will be presented with an Oral B Professional Care 7000 toothbrush. Write to Clinical Questions at the above address or email vital@bda.org.