

ARF FEE TOO HIGH SAY DENTAL NURSES

Just over 4,000 dental care professionals (DCPs) have been removed from the General Dental Council (GDC) register for not paying the annual retention fee (ARF) payment. According to latest figures, 651 other DCPs have specifically asked to be removed for reasons including taking a career break or retiring, and the GDC had successfully processed nearly 53,000

criticised the GDC for setting the ARF fee at £96, as dental nurses are charged the same as other DCPs even though they earn much less.

One group of dental nurses felt so strongly over the matter that it has set up its own Facebook group to gather support to try and get the fee lowered for dental nurses. The group's creator, who is also petitioning the Prime Minister over the matter, Xyanthe Lambert said, 'The feedback I have received through my

Facebook group and also the growing number of signatories on the online petition [indicate] that it is wholly unfair that the ARF for dental nurses is the same as for technicians and hygienists/therapists, who have the potential to earn far more. Many dental nurses now feel undervalued having to pay a disproportionate amount of their salaries for ARF, indemnity insurance and CPD just to be legally allowed to do their job.'

The British Association of Dental Nurses (BADN) believes that the £96 yearly fee is excessive in view of current salary levels for dental nurses, particularly for those who work part time, or at minimum wage levels.

Its Chief Executive, Pam Swain commented, 'There should be a much lower fee for dental nurses and those who work part time should pay a lower fee than their full time colleagues.' She added that fee should also be collected in smaller payments throughout the year, instead of one large payment.

payments at the deadline of 31 July. However, some dental nurses have

According to the GDC, the ARF fees are reviewed yearly and there was no rise for 2009. A spokesperson said, 'We ran a consultation earlier this year on a draft ARF policy, which was open to all registrants, professional bodies and any other interested parties. The Finance and Human Resources Committee took the view that due to the registration of dental nurses and dental technicians being in its infancy, more time was needed for further work on this issue.'

However BADN President Angie McBain hit back, commenting 'The BADN participated in the GDC's consultation exercise and advised that the fee for dental nurses should be lowered considerably. The response we received from the GDC was that there was insufficient evidence that changes to the fees policy or the current fee structure were necessary at present.'

Now the BADN are conducting an online survey of dental nurse salaries in the UK, in order to present evidence to the GDC about the difficulty some dental nurses are experiencing in paying the fee.

The online survey asks dental nurses about their salary, how they are paid, what additional benefits their employer provides and about their specific domestic circumstances. The BADN will use the results to present a case to the GDC for lowering the fee. Dental nurses are invited to participate in the survey, via a link on the Latest News page of the BADN website at www.badn.org.uk or through a link on the BADN group page on Facebook. The survey will close on 30 September 2009.



DENTAL THERAPIST OF THE YEAR

Catherine Gray of NHS Barking and Dagenham has been named Dental Therapist of the Year at the annual Dental Awards 2009. Catherine, who works for the Special Care and Community Dental Service (SCCDS) based at Five Elms Health Centre in Dagenham, was recognised for her work with special needs patients.

At present, she is undertaking a Certificate in Hypnosis Applied to Dentistry that will help people who are anxious about dental treatment feel more relaxed, reducing the need for medication.



NEW BDA ONLINE TRAINING

A new online training course from the British Dental Association that qualifies DCPs to advise patients on oral health has been launched. 'Oral Health Education for Dental Care Professionals' guides participants through 'bite-sized' modules comprising mini-lectures complemented by animated videos and diagrams. A dedicated tutor supports participants, and a textbook, revision notes and mock exams are also provided leading to a National Examining Board for Dental Nurses Certificate in Oral Health Education. For more information visit www.bda.org/dcps/course/ohe/index.aspx.