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Why can't experienced DCPs receive similar training?

In the context of the ongoing crisis of the shortfall of patient access to dental care I think it is important to recognise that a skilled workforce capable of offering appropriate care is already in place.

Therapists and hygienists are already providing a comprehensive service and treating dental disease successfully in all sectors of dentistry. It seems somewhat of an anomaly that we cannot carry out routine examinations under the indirect supervision of a dentist. We are all taught to read radiographs and we can all recognise and treat periodontal disease and caries.

Dental undergraduates are taught to do this at an early stage in their training so why can't experienced dental care professionals receive similar training? Surely it would be more cost effective to train a workforce already in place to undertake examinations?

With the abolishment of hygienists' and therapists' remits the General Dental Council surely should be looking at giving DCPs the ability to diagnose as a core curriculum based activity. Dental technicians are now able to carry out work without a dentist's prescription so surely they should be doing some form of screening to all their patients.

The result would have a direct benefit to the patient and the general dental health of the nation. Quite simply, more patients would be able to access dental care than are able to currently. Dental care professionals do not command a salary that equates to that of a



dentist therefore Primary Care Trusts can use their funding wisely to employ a therapist/hygienist who can offer a high standard of dentistry with a strong focus on preventive care.

David Martin
Dental Therapist of the Year 2007

David wins Colgate Oral Health Professional products (£100 RRP) courtesy of Colgate.



Hygiene at home and away

I read with great interest your article on *Routes to registration* (*Vital* winter 07 pages 44-45). I am a 3rd year student in Dental Hygiene and Therapy at Birmingham University and I am currently working on my research project called 'Access to the UK – Skills Transference for the Dental Hygienist' in which I am looking at access barriers and the process of skills transference which dental hygienists (DHs) who have qualified in



countries other than the UK have to undergo (contrasting EU and non-EU countries).

At the end of your article you encouraged readers to share their experiences with *Vital*. I am still looking for dental hygienists who qualified in Canada, the US or Australia for interviews or for just generally sharing their experiences, whether they have achieved skills transference and are registered or not. I would love to hear from them.

Friederike Schoonhoven

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