

LETTER

Easy and fun

My name is Julie, I am a Senior Dental Nurse working in a private dental practice and I have recently signed up for the *Vital* CPD online. I wanted to let you know how amazing it is and I am so pleased I have signed up.

It could not be simpler to use, sign in and type in your GDC number and away you go. It has to be the easiest way to do verifiable CPD and you even keep a record for me. I can even print a certificate off once I have completed the questions for my own records too.

All the best *Vital* with your online CPD and I hope it will really take off. I hope all those dental nurses who have not signed up yet do so; it's so easy and fun to do.

Thank you for helping us to do CPD.

Julie King, Senior Dental Nurse, Carlisle

Ed's note: We are aware that a number of people have had difficulties using the Vital CPD site. Detailed instructions have now been added to www.nature.com/vital which can be accessed by clicking the link that says 'About Vital CPD'. They can also be found on page 49 of this issue.

Julie wins Colgate goodies worth £100.



Congratulations

I just saw the latest issue of *Vital* (summer 2008) and the impressive new website and wanted to say congratulations! What a lot of work has gone into the new look – all worth the effort and such interesting articles as well. I am sure you will get plenty of people signing up to the new verifiable CPD scheme just for DCPs – two hours every issue is not to be sneezed at!

Dame Margaret Seward, Former Editor, BDJ Chief Dental Officer, 2000-2002

Dental nurse costs

Could someone out there please advise me? I am getting increasingly worried about the cost of being a dental nurse. Our new members of staff now have to pay to go on courses, cover the costs for their indemnity, have to pay for registration and pay to keep up with CPD requirements so they can work in surgery.

Now my new members have been told they have to pay for Hep B injections. Is this true? Surely the NHS can cover this when it is another requirement dental nurses have to comply with?

Are there any suggestions of help for my staff? It seems so unfair that they are prepared to work for the NHS yet they do not get any benefits apart from the enjoyment of caring for the public.

I am finding it difficult to keep their spirits up. Life is a struggle without all these added stresses just to work. Staff wage increase cannot go up enough to cover all these extra costs.

Is there anything I can do to help them that doesn't cost money? We have a lovely team that is willing to sacrifice a lot for our practice but they also have to live and I would like to give them something back.

Gill Finch, by email

Lesley Derry at the British Dental Association responds: We appreciate that registration has created additional costs for both dental nurses and practice owners. Although the BDA would encourage practices to support their staff as much as possible, each situation will be different as dental nurses and practice owners will agree the level of support that feels appropriate for their situation.

Maintaining an up-to-date registration is the responsibility of the individual registrant and for dental nurses, the cost of registration is often met by the practice. Practices are under no obligation to meet registration costs, but where the practice opts to meet them, the BDA recommends that it does so indirectly – by paying the nurse an equivalent 'bonus' at the appropriate time. The nurse is then responsible for his or her own registration. Indemnity is another issue and there are a

variety of options to cover this requirement. The GDC accepts membership of an indemnity/insurance provider (either individual or the employer's membership) and NHS indemnity. Registrants need to consider which cover is appropriate for their circumstances. Where a dental nurse obtains cover through the employer's arrangements, most plans will provide this without additional cost but may have limitations or exclusions. These must be explained to the dental nurse, who may decide to hold personal indemnity/insurance in preference.

CPD is a condition of registration and many providers are using this requirement to provide a variety of relevant courses. Courses arranged through Deaneries and PCTs are often offered at reasonable costs and BDA branches frequently welcome DCPs to their events. DCP organisations will also provide CPD through journals and conferences. Vital has also launched a CPD programme for DCPs. Some of the necessary training can be provided in practice (eg medical emergencies). Staff meetings can also be held in a way that allows them to comply with verifiable CPD requirements.

Hepatitis B immunisation is an employer's responsibility. Although a dental nurse has to demonstrate immunisation against hepatitis B at the time of registration, the employing dentist has an overriding responsibility to provide a safe place of work (as far as is practicable) from an employee's first day at the practice. The BDA recommends that as soon as a dental nurse who is not immunised is appointed, immunisation against hepatitis B should start with all associated costs being met by the practice. A dental nurse who is ready to apply for registration with the GDC should have been immunised during the course of their employment and training.

