

Foreword

Good news in dentistry can be thin on the ground at times - what with the "Dentists from Hell" programme on television, the recent Audit Commission Report and the Office of Fair Trading Report on Private Dentistry, dentists have certainly been under scrutiny.

To cheer up the general dental practitioners the Department is pleased to announce a £1.7m package. Allocation will be strongly linked to quality initiatives which will improve patient care and service. You may like to think of entering your practices for the Focus Awards. DHSSPS have linked up with the DoH in England and Wales and I look forward to seeing some local representation in the finalists.

The Department is commencing on Regional Strategy which will set out the framework for the next 20 years of healthcare delivery. From the Regional Strategy will be further strategies of primary and secondary care. Further details in the article.

I hope to involve colleagues across the whole profession.

I am away for an early summer break in Greece - well, not really! I am attending the Council of European Chief Dental Officers and finalising plans for a meeting here in Belfast in October. It will be a joint meeting with the South of Ireland and allow us to show off our island to the rest of Europe.

I hope you all enjoy a relaxing break over the next couple of months and return refreshed to face all the challenges in dentistry.

Regards - Doreen Wilson

Practice Quality Improvement Money

The DHSSPS have secured funding of £1.7million over the next two years to be spent on quality improvement initiatives in the GDS. The thrust of the scheme will be to improve working practices that, in turn, will lead to service improvements and ultimately benefits patients. Indeed this was the basis on which funding was secured. The Department is in the process of finalising criteria against which the funding will be allocated and it is proposed that HSSB Dental Directors will liaise with their LDC officials to identify appropriate areas on which to spend the money

Oral Health Strategy & Primary Care Dental Strategy

The 1995 Oral Health Strategy (OHS) underwent a mid-term evaluation in 2000/01 and is due for full evaluation in 2005. However, with the need to address the current modernisation issues in dentistry, particularly against the timeframe that Options for Change presents, it is felt to be more appropriate to bring forward the final evaluation of the OHS to Autumn 2003. It is envisaged that the final evaluation will commence in September 2003 and be completed by December 2003. A steering group will be appointed to oversee this final evaluation.

Following on from this it will be necessary to develop a new OHS in order to set targets and objectives for the next ten years. This new OHS will also set the context for the Primary Care Dental Strategy (PCDS). The PCDS will take a comprehensive look at all the various strands that affect the primary care dental sector, for example, GDS, CDS, ICT, PCDs, CPD, workforce issues etc. Some of this work has already been completed, eg Workforce Review and CDS Review. Work on the new OHS and PCDs will commence in early 2004. The exact operational process by which the new strategies are to be rolled out is currently being discussed. It is hoped to complete both these strategies by the end of 2004.

Review of the Community Dental Service

One of the recommendations of the mid-term evaluation of the Oral Health Strategy (OHS) was that, *'the overall aims and objectives of the Community Dental Service should be reviewed in the light of changing dental practice and the general oral health background'*.

In August 2002 Capita Business Services Ltd were contracted to carry out the Community Dental Service (CDS) Review under the direction of a steering group chaired by the Chief Dental Officer. The objectives of the Review were to assess the current performance of the service, decide upon the future role and structure of the CDS and devise an action plan to move the service from the current position to the desired position. The methodology employed involved extensive information gathering of activity levels from all HSS Trust CDS teams. There was also comprehensive stakeholder consultation on the current status of the service and possible future directions using questionnaires, focus groups and face to face interviews. A series of workshops were organised to select a preferred model for the service and agree a mission statement. The report was completed in April 2003.

The Departmental Board has asked that further work is undertaken in developing a model to take forward the key findings.

Consent

New guidance on Good Practice in Consent has been issued by the Chief Medical Officer, Chief Dental Officer, Chief Nursing Officer and Chief Inspector, Social Services Inspectorate.

The aims of the guidance are to promote patient-centred consent by focusing on the rights of individuals and their families, to improve both patients' and professionals' knowledge of the law and develop documentation that supports good practice.

Two documents have been published:

- Reference Guide to Consent for Examination, Treatment or Care. This gives a background to the law on consent for health and social care professionals.

- Good Practice in Consent for Examination, Treatment or Care: A Handbook for the HPSS. This contains nine separate parts:

- Good Practice in Consent: an implementation guide for healthcare professionals. This contains a Model Policy for Consent for Examination or Treatment, a patient information leaflet "Consent - its up to you" and model consent forms.
- Seeking Consent - Working with children, older people and people with learning disabilities. These booklets contain guidance for health and social care professionals on good practice when seeking consent from these groups of patients.

- Consent - what you have a right to expect: guides for adults, children and young people, parents, people with learning disabilities and relatives and carers. These are information leaflets on consent for patients and their families

The documents are available at www.dhsspsni.gov.uk or for those without internet access from the Health Promotion Team, DHSSPS, Castle Buildings, Belfast BT4 3SQ, Tel: 02890520534.

For further information contact: Dr Margaret Mark, C3.16, Castle Buildings, Belfast BT4 3SQ, Tel: 02890522359 or e-mail: margaret.mark@dhsspsni.gov.uk.

PCD Event

An evening symposium on PCD Registration was held in the Hilton Hotel, Templepatrick on 26 March 2003. This event was jointly organised by the Chief Dental Officer (DHSSPS) and the GDC, and attracted over 200 PCDs. Representatives of the various PCD organisations took the opportunity to put on display stands and were available throughout the event to provide advice and information to their colleagues. The event was opened by the Chief Dental Officer, Doreen Wilson, and this was followed by the first speaker of the night GDC President, Nairn Wilson, who spoke on 'The new style GDC'. This was followed by the next speaker, GDC Registrar, Antony Townsend who spoke on 'What registration will mean for PCDs'. These presentations were followed by a lively question and answer session during which many of the concerns of the various PCD groups were raised. Among the issues raised were funding for PCD training, the change to the range of duties of particular PCD groups and future CPD requirements. One of the issues which was raised in relation to dental nurses, and which has been voiced by many general dental practitioners, is who will and who will not be eligible for registration on the basis of experience rather than qualifications. The details below are designed to give some guidance on this important issue (it is important to emphasise that this guidance is the best available at present, but is subject to change, and relates only to dental nurses).

An unqualified nurse who can demonstrate that she/he has worked full-time for four years in the past eight will be eligible for entry to the PCD Register.

Nurses who cannot demonstrate four years full-time work in the past eight will need to have an equivalent amount of experience. Below is a simple table which allows part-time dental nurses to work out whether they meet the experience requirement.

Using the table, a dental nurse will have to hit 1000 days to be eligible for entry onto the register. Nurses may include the following in calculating the time worked, provided that the nurse remained employed throughout this time:

- > Maternity leave
- > Sickness absence
- > Holiday

Any nurse short of the required days worked may be able to make up the shortfall during the two year transitional period. This transitional entry route will only be open for a two-year period from the date that the register opens.

Dental Nursing Transition Table - Calculating Eligibility

Number of years employed	Days worked per week			
	1	2	3	4
1	52	104	156	208
2	104	208	312	416
3	156	312	468	624
4	208	416	624	832
5	260	520	780	1040
6	312	624	936	1248
7	364	728	1092	1456
8	416	832	1248	1664
9	468	936	1404	1872
10	520	1040	1560	2080

Focus Awards

The Focus Awards have expanded in 2003 to include nominations for dental practices and clinics from Northern Ireland and Wales. The Awards are being jointly organised by the BDA and the health departments in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. There are five categories this year, with each Focus Award winner receiving £1000, and an overall winner receiving an additional £1000. The categories in this year's Focus Awards are:

- ❖ Excellence in children's dental care
- ❖ Excellence in treating those with special healthcare needs
- ❖ Excellence in patient information and involvement
- ❖ Excellence in creating a patient friendly environment
- ❖ Excellence in the development of good practice.

Nomination forms are now available from the BDA at phone number 020 7563 4587. The shortlisted practices and clinics will be invited to an awards ceremony which takes place in London in September.

Dental Probity Adviser

Eastern Health and Social Services Board are currently looking to employ a new Dental Probity Adviser. The post is 0.5 WTE and the advert for this post will appear in the British Dental Journal edition of 14/06/2003.

Further information is available from Colin Petherick at the EHSSB on 028 9032 1313.

School of Dentistry

There are a number of teaching assistant posts in the School of Dentistry that are filled by General Dental Practitioners. Every year there is a degree of turnover of these posts with some GDPs releasing their sessions. If any General Dental Practitioner is interested in applying for a teaching assistant post, then they should contact Dr David Hussey at the School of Dentistry. David can be reached on 028 9089 4690 or by e-mail d.hussey@qub.ac.uk and he will arrange for application forms to be sent to interested individuals when vacancies occur.