

Foreword

Dear Colleague,

As we rapidly approach the end of the year, it is a sobering exercise to look back and see what we have achieved - or not! Much of the work in Dental Branch feeds into other areas and passes on. Sometimes I feel like the dinner lady putting scoopfuls of mash onto the plates as they pass!

However, one meal we have accomplished this year is the publication of the new Oral Health Strategy and it is interesting to read the comments coming in to the consultation. The majority are very supportive of the preventive approach. There is barely time to reflect on one project before we are off on another. The Primary Dental Care Strategy is the next big exercise and I hope we have an opportunity to meet and talk with many of you during the process. In Dental Branch we keep a close eye on what is happening across the water. The roll out of the new arrangements in England is not without its problems. Maybe the smaller numbers of the profession here will enable us to keep in

touch with your concerns. I think most practitioners would favour a slower, incremental change and prefer to be in a position to gauge how it affects their practising pattern. It takes time to turn around and whilst not wanting to be accused of dragging my feet, I urge caution at following too closely events in England. A start has been made on this by examining the Items of Service in the SDR. It has proved to be very complicated and much more difficult than originally envisaged. We will keep you informed of the outcome from that exercise.

Below you can read the results of the DHSSPS satisfaction survey - dentists come out very well. As we know most patients appreciate their dentist but it is important we come up with a dental service that dentists can also appreciate. That is our task for next year.

I wish you and your staff a peaceful and prosperous 2005.

Regards - Doreen Wilson
Chief Dental Officer
December 2004

Dentists Perform Well in Satisfaction Survey

The dental profession has performed well in the most recent public attitudes survey on health care services. For the last two years the Department has commissioned a survey to garner the opinions of the Northern Ireland public on the various aspects of health and social services, including satisfaction with the services provided.

The table below shows that, overall, 96% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service dentists provided and there were no statistical differences across the 4 Health Board areas.

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the service (dental services)? (N=915)

	NI		Eastern		Northern		Southern		Western	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Very satisfied	589	64	238	66	142	66	118	65	91	58
Satisfied	292	32	112	31	65	30	58	32	58	37
Dissatisfied	19	2	8	2	5	2	4	2	2	1
Very Dissatisfied	11	1	4	1	2	1	1	1	4	3
Don't know	4	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	1	1
Total	915	99	363	101	215	99	181	100	156	100
Satisfied	881	96	349	96	207	96	176	97	148	95
Dissatisfied	30	3	12	3	7	3	5	3	6	4
Don't know	4	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	1	1
Total	915	99	363	100	215	99	181	100	156	100

It is encouraging to see that the number of people very satisfied with the service has risen from 55% in 2003 to 64% in 2004, a rise which is statistically significant.

Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with the service (Dental Services)?

	2003		2004	
	N	%	N	%
Very satisfied	556	55	589	64
Satisfied	418	41	292	32
Dissatisfied	24	2	19	2
Very Dissatisfied	11	1	11	1
Don't know	2	-	4	-
Total	1,011	99	915	99
Satisfied	974	96	881	96
Dissatisfied	35	3	30	3
Don't Know	2	-	4	-
Total	1,011	99	915	99

The survey also looked at the various aspects of the service provided and again the public response was largely positive with 95% of responses rating the attitudes of the dental and reception staff as excellent or good and 91% rating the condition of the premises as excellent or good.

How would you rate each of the following... (Dental Services) (N=915)

	Excellent		Good		Fair		Poor		Don't know	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The convenience of getting to the service	374	41	413	45	91	10	32	4	5	1
The length of time taken to receive the services	291	32	408	45	133	15	77	8	6	1
The helpfulness of any information provided	389	43	433	47	58	6	21	2	13	1
The explanation of the next steps in your care	396	43	423	46	56	6	16	2	24	3
The general attitude of the medical staff	519	57	345	38	36	4	11	1	4	-
The general attitude of the reception staff	477	52	397	43	28	3	9	1	4	-
The condition of the premises	457	50	372	41	66	7	15	2	5	1

Special Waste

The Department currently funds the collection of clinical waste from dental practices and in 2005 this service will be extended to include special waste. It was planned to introduce this service in the 2004 financial year but due to operational problems the CSA were unable to go out to tender on the contract. These problems have now been overcome and it is planned to go out to tender early in the New Year with introduction of the service by May 2005.

In the mean time, the Department is making arrangements for a payment to go out to health service dental practices to help with costs for disposal of special waste for the 2004/05 financial year. It is planned that there will be a basic payment of £100 per practice plus an additional payment depending on the number of dentists working in the practice.

PCD Road show

The GDC return to Northern Ireland in March 2005 to update PCD's on the registration process. Two evening events are planned, 22 March in Derry and 23 March in Belfast. The programme for these events will be:

- 5.45pm Registration and Light Buffet
- 6.30pm Welcome and Introduction
Doreen Wilson, CDO Northern Ireland
- 6.35pm The General Dental Council
Rosemarie Khan, GDC Member
- 7.00pm The New Framework for PCD's
Antony Townsend, GDC Member
- 7.35pm Questions from the floor
Chaired by Richard Graham, GDC Member
- 8.30pm End

Notification will be sent out to PCD's through Trusts and general dental practices. Further information can be obtained from the GDC website www.gdc-uk.org or by contacting Saima Waheed by phone on 02078873855 or email: swaheed@gdc-uk.org

Referral Dental Service

The Referral Dental Service (RDS) has recently revised its monitoring protocols and will send a copy to every general dental practitioner on the dental list. These protocols clearly set out the monitoring process, the roles of the RDO's, CSA and Dental Directors of HSSB's in that process and gives guidance on dental record content. They are available in hard copy and electronically.

Below are some figures on RDO report codes for the last 5 months of positive assurance and the first 5 months post positive assurance (PA). While the latter figures will be influenced by PA due to the time lapse from RDO examination to report generation, it can be clearly seen that once the record card is removed from the monitoring equation, there is a dramatic effect on the distribution of report codings. This is shown in the tables below.

1 February 2004 to 30 June 2004

	called	examined	A		B		C		D		E		X	
E	485	137	34	24.8%	29	21.2%	71	51.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	2.2%
N	484	188	53	28.2%	33	17.6%	99	52.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.6%
S	242	84	23	27.4%	10	11.9%	52	61.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	2.4%
W	247	94	19	20.2%	12	12.8%	61	64.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	2.1%
NI	1458	503	129	25.6%	84	16.7%	283	56.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	10	2.0%

1 July 2004 to 1 December 2004

	called	examined	A		B		C		D		E		X	
E	766	160	65	40.6%	67	41.9%	27	16.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
N	480	125	51	40.8%	40	32.0%	30	24.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	3.2%
S	196	51	21	41.2%	13	25.5%	14	27.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	3.9%
W	319	102	29	28.4%	32	31.4%	38	37.3%	1	1.0%	0	0.0%	3	2.9%
NI	1761	438	166	37.9%	152	34.7%	109	24.9%	1	0.2%	0	0.0%	10	2.3%

Primary Dental Care Strategy

Work on the future of health service primary care dental services has been progressing over the past 3 months. A project board was convened in September 2004 to oversee the strategy and the project group began work in October 2004. The project team has a wide remit and its work includes looking at various service delivery models, remuneration systems, IT and workforce issues.

An important part of the strategy is involvement of the profession both in terms of consultation and seeking their opinions and in order to achieve this:

- Presentations have been given to the 4 LDC's on the aims and work programme of the strategy during October and November 2004.

- A survey of all health service GPs, dentists in CDS and vocational trainees was undertaken in November 2004. Response rates have been very good for these 3 groups (over 60%) and the results of the survey are being analysed and will be posted on dental branch website: <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/pgroups/dental/dentalnew.asp>
- A PCD focus group meeting will be held early in the new year in Belfast (details can be obtained from Liam McGuckin 028 90 520212 liam.mcguckin@dhsspsni.gov.uk)

It is planned to have the strategy completed and out for public consultation by the summer of 2005.

In addition to the work on the strategy, dental branch in conjunction with the Primary Care Directorate have engaged the services of statisticians to look at the current SDR with a view to re-profiling and simplifying the SDR in the short term. Any significant changes to the SDR will be agreed with the Dental Practice Committee.

New Postgraduate Dental Dean NIMDTA

Dr David Hussey takes up appointment as the new postgraduate dental dean on 1 January 2005. David graduated from Queens University Belfast in 1978. He held house officer posts in the Royal Victoria Hospital and the Belfast City Hospital before a 2-year period in general dental practice in North Belfast.

David went on to pursue an academic career, which included a secondment to the University of Western Ontario in 1986. He was appointed Senior Lecturer/ Consultant in Restorative Dentistry in 1989 and completed his PhD on Resin Bonded Bridgework in 2000

Speaking on the announcement of his appointment David said

'I am looking forward to the challenges of this post for the next 5 years. There is already an excellent team in place and I am sure that together we can continue to deliver first-rate postgraduate education for the whole profession within the province.'

Dr Hussey replaces Mr Ian Saunders who served as postgraduate dental dean for a long and successful tenure. In his term of office Mr Saunders has overseen the introduction of mandatory vocational training, the development of Northern Ireland's first general professional training scheme and the expansion of the dental postgraduate programme. We thank Ian for his dedication and work in bringing dental postgraduate training to its current level.

Sedation Survey

There was an excellent response to the sedation survey of general dental practices carried out in the summer of 2004 with 66% of practices replying. Thank you to all the dentists who took the time to complete the survey. The information gleaned from the survey will prove invaluable in terms of bidding for extra resources and planning for ongoing training in sedation.

Below is a synopsis of some of the findings:

- 57.5% of practices carry out sedation
- 94% of sedating practices provide RA sedation and 35% provide IV sedation
- An average of 12 patients per practice per week are treated using IV with 15 patients per week per practice treated with RA
- Over $\frac{3}{4}$ of respondents expressed an interest in provision of more training in sedation, and the majority wanted this training to be aimed at the whole team
- Preference for types of training:
 - 72% hands on
 - 46% lecture type courses
 - 25% web based(N.B. more than one type could be selected)
- 37% preferred training in the evenings
- 15% at weekends
- 15% during working hours
- More than 3 out of every 4 would like more training in RA whereas almost half would like more training in IV
- Referrals for sedation:
 - 61% of referrals are to other GDPs
 - 37% to CDS
 - 27% to hospitals
- Almost 2 out of 3 felt that there was adequate provision of sedation services in their area.