Public satisfaction with NHS dental services at 20-year high

British Social Attitudes survey sees less discontent with public care

By DTI

LONDON, UK: People’s satisfaction with dental care provided by the National Health Service (NHS) has risen further in recent years, as shown in the latest British Social Attitudes survey conducted by the National Centre for Social Research in London. According to the figures, only less than one in five patients were discontent with the dentistry services last year.

The numbers reflect some of the highest levels of public satisfaction with these services since the early 1990s and are a dramatic improvement over figures in the early 2000s, which saw dissatisfaction rise to almost 38 per cent, the report said. More satisfaction was only observed for general practitioner services, which scored slightly better in the recent survey than dental services.

Overall, 65 per cent of those surveyed said they were satisfied with how the NHS is run today.

The British Dental Association hailed the results, saying that dentists should take real pride in what they have achieved despite government indifference, sustained underfunding and the barriers presented by the target-driven 2006 contract that still remains in place.

“It’s a miracle NHS dentists have been able to overcome all the hurdles placed in front of us to do right by our patients. It shows what might be possible if this ‘Cinderella Service’ received appropriate priority,” commented BDA Principal Executive Committee Chair Mick Armstrong. “This profession can take pride in the fact that public satisfaction in NHS dentistry has hit a near 20-year high in spite of chronic underfunding and discredited contracts.”

The British Social Attitudes survey has been conducted among members of the British public since 1983. The latest survey was carried out between July and October 2016 and asked a nationally representative sample of nearly 1,000 people about their satisfaction with the NHS overall, as well as nearly 2,000 people about their satisfaction with individual NHS services.

Goodwill decreases owing to uncertainty in practice sales market

By DTI

KESWICK, UK: Despite a drop back in the average of goodwill as a percentage of fee income, both NHS and mixed practices have continued to attract a significant premium, according to the latest goodwill survey by the National Association of Specialist Dental Accountants and Lawyers (NASDAL). Practices sold at an average of 126 per cent of fee income in the last quarter ending 31 January, with NHS practices attracting an even higher rate of 156 per cent, the figures demonstrate.

With an average of 101 per cent of goodwill as a percentage of fee income, private practices too have remained steady compared with previous quarters.

According to Alan Suggett, specialist dental accountant and partner in UNW who compiles the goodwill survey, the results indicate a greater discrepancy between valuations and deals, but also a higher uncertainty in the market, particularly when mydentist withdrew from buying new practices in recent months.

“There seemed to be a general perception that the corporates, including mydentist, were buying up every practice across the country,” Suggett said. “Whilst this wasn’t true and mydentist was only responsible for a small percentage of sales, it does seem that their withdrawal may have led to a more general loss of confidence.”

“With a time lag between valuations and deals done, it will be interesting to see if the quarters to come will reflect the optimism of these high valuations when it comes to actually signing on the dotted line,” he added.

The goodwill figures are collated from accountant and lawyer members of NASDAL on a quarterly basis in order to provide a useful guide to the practice sales market.