Three cheers for Dr Crouch

A n orthodontist has won a landmark victory, after taking on the Department of Health and fighting against an appeal, which would have given health bosses the right to terminate dental contracts without cause or notice.

The DH lodged the appeal earlier this year after Eddie Crouch, an orthodontist in Birmingham, won a Judicial Review, which said that primary care trusts (PCTs) were wrong to insert a clause in the NHS dental contracts allowing them to terminate the contract without cause or notice.

The DH battled it out in the High Court, saying that health bosses needed such a power.

The Court of Appeal upheld the earlier ruling that the reasons by which a PCT can end a contract are set out in legislation and that a PCT must abide by legitimate termination reasons.

If the DH had won the appeal, primary care trusts would have had the power to end dentists’ contracts with as little as one day’s notice.

Dr Crouch said that it was ‘reassuring’ that ‘fairness was seen to be upheld’ and said it ‘should encourage others to challenge inappropriate powers that PCTs and the Department try to influence’.

Dr Crouch was forced to rely on financial support from fellow dentists to fight the case after he failed to come to an agreement with the British Dental Association (BDA) over a confidentiality document they wanted him to sign.

Mouthwash link with cancer

Mouthwashes containing alcohol can cause oral cancer and should be removed from supermarket shelves, a dental health study claims.

The news, which was revealed as Dental Tribune was going to press reports sufficient scientific evidence that such mouthwashes contribute to an increased risk of the disease.

The ethanol in mouthwash is thought to allow cancer-causing substances to permeate the lining of the mouth.

Michael McCullough, associate professor of oral medicine at the University of Melbourne, Australia, who led the study, said: ‘We see people with oral cancer who have no other risk factors than the use of mouthwash containing alcohol, so what we’ve done is review all the evidence.

‘Since this article, further evidence has come out, too. We believe there should be warnings. If it was a facial cream that had the effect of reducing acne but had a four to fivefold increased risk of skin cancer, no-one would be recommending it.’

Professor McCullough, chair of the Australian Dental Association’s therapeutics committee, said the alcohol in mouthwash ‘increases the permeability of the mucous membrane to other carcinogens, such as nicotine.

A toxic breakdown product of alcohol called acetaldehyde that may accumulate in the oral cavity.

Standing ovation

It’s been one big emotional roller coaster for Dr Eddie Crouch lately. Here he speaks exclusively on why he continued to fight the good fight.

Two sides

The two clinical endodontic questions continue to cause much controversy in the profession. Dr Richard Mounce explains why.

Veneer pitfalls

There are more patients than ever before presenting with acute sensitivity and pain after veneer treatments says Dr Sultan.

Clinical case studies

Endo Tribune

Endo Tribune

News and opinions

News in brief

Free service

Dentists are to get a free, confidential service giving them support and advice on physical and mental health issues. The Practitioner Health Programme (PHP) which is also aimed at doctors, is initially being piloted in the London area. Dentists and doctors have high rates of mental health problems, especially addiction problems and depression. Doctors and dentists also find it difficult to ask for help and often their problems reach crises levels before they feel able to seek help.

This new service and the first of its kind, will help dentists and doctors, particularly where their condition may be affecting their ability to work.

Judith Husband, vice chair of the British Dental Association (BDA), said: ‘It takes courage for healthcare workers suffering from an illness or an addiction to acknowledge that they have a problem in the first place, so taking the next step in accessing appropriate treatment can present real difficulties. We believe this dedicated, one-stop confidential service that has been designed specifically for health professionals, will make it much easier for dentists and doctors to get the support they need.’

If it is successful, the service may be extended to other areas across the country.

For more information, see www.php.nhs.uk

New member

The Chief Dental Officer, Barry Cockcroft has been invited to join the new strategic group that will oversee all medical education and training in England – Medical Education England (MEE).

The group was formed following recommendations by Sir John Tooke’s Inquiry into Modernising Medical Careers and was endorsed by Lord Darzi in his NHS Next Stage Review. MEE will coordinate a major restructuring of postgraduate training for dentists, doctors and other healthcare professions, and will also carry out national-level scrutiny of workforce planning, and the commissioning of education and training by strategic health authorities.

More complaints

The Dental Complaints Service (DCS) logged 227 complaints in October and 158 complaints in November last year. For January-November 2008, the DCS logged 1,501 complaints, an increase of nine per cent over the same period in 2007. The average number of complaints logged since the DCS was launched in May 2006 is around 32 per week.
Mouthwash link with cancer

Dr Gregory, a former dental public health consultant for NHS Fife, is a fellow of the Faculty of Public Health, Royal College of Physicians and a member of the Faculty of Dental Surgery of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

Dr Gregory said: ‘I am tremendously excited by this award. It is always a great privilege to be recognised for the work that you do and this is a really fitting end to a wonderful few months.’

More Honours for the profession

New president for the BSDHT

Ms Harris told BSDHT members when she took over the presidency ‘I sincerely believe that the success of your society should never be down to…a particular presidency, rather that it evolves to establish if there is a genuine connection.

If patients are in any doubt about using mouthwash, they should consult their dentists.’

Dr Nigel Carter, the chief executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, rejected the findings and said: ‘A recent, and more thorough review of all available evidence carried out by leading experts on behalf of the foundation concluded there were no proven links between alcohol-containing mouthwashes and increased incidence of mouth cancer. The public should not worry.’

Last night, a spokeswoman for Johnson & Johnson Ltd UK, the manufacturer of Listerine, said: ‘There is no scientific evidence to support an association between the use of alcohol-containing mouthwashes, such as Listerine, and an increased risk of oral cancer.’

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New president for the BSDHT

Marina Harris is to be the new president of the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy.

She currently works as a dental hygiene tutor at the University of Portsmouth’s School of Professionals—Complementary to Dentistry.

Ms Harris has been working closely with Mike Wheeler, the former editor for head and neck cancer—irrespective of whether users also drank alcohol or smoked.

But the effects of mouthwash were worst in smokers, who had a fivefold increased risk of cancers of the oral cavity, pharynx and larynx. Those who also drank alcohol had more than five times the risk.

However, Professor Damien Wainwedge, scientific adviser to the British Dental Association, said further research was needed to substantiate the claims.

‘Excessive consumption of alcohol and tobacco are well recognised as risk factors for development of oral cancers,’ he said.

‘This paper raises interesting issues, but the evidence showing any link between the prolonged use of mouthwash containing alcohol and oral cancer is not conclusive, and requires further trials to establish if there is a genuine connection.

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