MPs knock independent review

Mps have criticised the independent review into NHS dentistry in England for failing to have a practising community dentist on its panel.

An independent team, to help improve access for patients who want to see a NHS dentist, was appointed in December by Health Secretary Alan Johnson.

The team led by Professor Jimmy Steele of Newcastle university is made up of Eric Bosoney, consultant in Dental Public Health, Cumbria Primary Care Trust (PCT), Janet Clarke, clinical director of Salaried Dental Services, Heart of Birmingham Teaching PCT and Tom Wilson, director of contracts, Milton Keynes PCT.

He also questioned why no health minister attended the British Dental Association’s (BDA) conference last year ‘to speak on behalf of the government, given that the contract is so controversial’.

Mr Penning would like to see the length of contracts extended so dentists can invest in their practices.

‘If we want dentists to come back into the NHS, or young dentists coming out of training schools—I have visited them and they are fantastic—to come into the NHS, we must give them the confidence to do so, especially in this difficult economic climate,’ he said.

The government has just published its further response to the conclusions and recommendations that were made in the critical Health Select Committee report last summer.

In the report, it accepted that ‘progress on improving access to dental services has been disappointing to date’ and set out the aims of the independent review.

Teeth worries

Nearly half of patients believe they could have been offered a better service by their dentist, according to a recent survey. The national survey carried out by RevalHealth.com, a special healthcare PR agency, also found that three quarters of the population would like to change something about themselves. Consumers are most worried about their teeth with 45 per cent wanting some kind of work, closely followed by a third wanting to change something about their body and 17 per cent who want to change their face or correct their eyesight through laser eye surgery.

Alcohol abuse

A retired dentist who lay dead in his house for weeks before being found, accidently drank himself to death, a coroner said. William Hunter Gray Dodds, a retired dentist in Portsmouth was discovered by police at his home surrounded by empty beer cans and rotten food. Portsmouth coroner’s court heard how Mr Gray Dodds, who suffered from alcoholism, had not been seen for several weeks before police found him dead.

His body was in an advanced state of decomposition and police said the death was not suspicious. He was known to be a long-term abuser of alcohol. Mr Gray Dodds had no known living family. He had divorced from his ex-wife, who now lives in South Africa, many years ago. An autopsy revealed Mr Gray Dodds had cirrhosis of the liver and had consumed a lot of alcohol before he died.

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