‘Unworkable and illogical’ proposals

The Dental Defence Union has criticised the General Dental Council (GDC) for proposals to establish indemnity requirements for dental professionals and patients in the future.

The Dental Defence Union (DDU) fear that under the proposals published for consultation by the General Dental Council (GDC), there will still be a risk that patients will not be compensated.

The GDC’s consultation, Requirement for professional indemnity for GDC registrants, closes in March 2009. It proposes two lists of minimum essential requirements for dental professionals, one for indemnity, one for providers of insurance and one for providers of discretionary indemnity.

Rupert Hoppenbrouwers, head of the DDU said: ‘The dual approach taken in the consultation document suggests that insurance and discretion are comparable and minimum requirements can be made for each type of indemnity. This is simply not the case. While we recognise this consultation is for discussion and will not necessarily reflect the direction the GDC will take, there is an inherent contradiction in seeking to establish indemnity requirements that can be complied with by insurers and discretionary indemnity providers when the latter cannot agree to anything that would fetter their discretion.

The consultation recognises that there is an issue of ‘enforceability’ with discretion. As a mutual, non-profit making organisation which provides insurance alongside discretionary benefits – a detail missing from the consultation – we agree. In common with other discretionary providers, we cannot agree to any minimum requirements governing our exercise of discretion, because the very nature of discretion means we cannot give any guarantees.’

Mr Hoppenbrouwers called the consultation document ‘fundamentally flawed’ and said: ‘If, in the interests of protecting patients, you set minimum requirements for one type of provider, to ensure that patients will always receive appropriate compensation you must make consistent requirements of other types of provider. The GDC knows that a discretionary provider cannot agree to requirements that are consistent with those for insurers because to do so would fetter their discretion and they may be considered as holding themselves out to be insurers, which would be illegal.’

The DDU expressed disappointment that the GDC has not attempted to bring dentistry into line with other healthcare providers such as opticians and chiropractors who have to have insurance and that it has not followed the example of regulators in most other EU countries where insurance is either compulsory or recommended.

‘For each dental professional to have a contract of insurance and the certainty that successful negligence claims within the policy will be paid is indisputable in the interests of patients and dental professionals themselves,’ added Mr Hoppenbrouwers.

Suspended prison sentence

A dentist in Merseyside, has been given a suspended jail sentence, for claiming false addresses while working.

Robert Nolan, who has run a practice in Southport, Merseyside, Liverpool, since 1990, made up patients so he could falsely claim insurance.

He told Liverpool Crown Court that ‘It was ‘calculated, blatant and persistent dishonesty’. He agreed to suspend a prison sentence after hearing of Nolan’s personal circumstances and his ‘positive good character’.

Nolan was convicted of 20 offences of obtaining money transfers by deception. Sixteen convictions related to fictitious patients with fake addresses while the remaining four related to overpayment for work.

The 36-week sentence was suspended for 18 months and Nolan was placed under supervision.

Judge Graham Morrow QC told Liverpool Crown Court that it was ‘calculated, blatant and persistent dishonesty’. He agreed to suspend a prison sentence after hearing of Nolan’s personal circumstances and his ‘positive good character’.

Mr Hoppenbrouwers called the consultation document ‘fundamentally flawed’ and said: ‘If, in the interests of protecting patients, you set minimum requirements for one type of provider, to ensure that patients will always receive appropriate compensation you must make consistent requirements of other types of provider. The GDC knows that a discretionary provider cannot agree to requirements that are consistent with those for insurers because to do so would fetter their discretion and they may be considered as holding themselves out to be insurers, which would be illegal.’

The DDU expressed disappointment that the GDC has not attempted to bring dentistry into line with other healthcare providers such as opticians and chiropractors who have to have insurance and that it has not followed the example of regulators in most other EU countries where insurance is either compulsory or recommended.

‘For each dental professional to have a contract of insurance and the certainty that successful negligence claims within the policy will be paid is indisputable in the interests of patients and dental professionals themselves,’ added Mr Hoppenbrouwers.

Entrepreneur fronts keynote address

Award-winning entrepreneur, Charan Gill, who featured on the TV show The Secret Millionaire, will be speaking at this year’s British Dental Conference and Exhibition.

Mr Gill, who sold his restaurant empire for £16m, will be giving the keynote address at the event which takes place in Glasgow, from 4-6 June. Author and paralympic gold-medallist Marc Woods will also be a guest speaker at the event.

The conference and exhibition Dentistry is transforming will bring together an extensive line-up of nearly 100 conference speakers who will explore the changing face of the profession today.

A range of exhibitors will showcase the changes in dental technology as the profession looks ahead to the challenges of the future.

International guest speakers at the event include Cherilyn Sheets, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, on aesthetic restorative practice; Nick Opdam, St. Bartholomew’s University Medical Centre, Nijmegen, The Netherlands, on the expanding use of posterior composites in clinical practice; and Mikael Zimmerman, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, on infection control.

There will also be sessions covering clinical and practical business skills for dental care professionals and a selection of seminars hosted by leading dental organisations.

Also, new at this year’s event will be 50-minute exhibition hall seminars entitled delegates to additional verifiable continuing professional development.

For further information or to register for Dentistry is transforming, the 2009 British Dental Conference and Exhibition, visit www.bda.org/conference or telephone 0870 166 0625. Any other queries about the event can be emailed to events@bda.org or by phone on 020 7565 4380.

Vomiting robot meets students

Dental students can now practise on dummy patients plus a ‘vomiting robot’ that can be programmed to throw up, have a fit or stop breathing – at a new £402,000 dental training centre in the north-east.

The Bourne House dental education and training centre, in Belmont, near Durham City, is only the second of its kind in the country.

Barry Cackcroft, Chief Dental Officer for England opened the centre, which contains a ‘phantom head room’ with realistic mannequins which give trainees the chance to practise their techniques in lifelike conditions.

There is also a robot that can be programmed to throw up, have a fit or stop breathing.

Malcolm Smith, postgraduate dental dean at the Northern Deanery said: ‘Having access to the finest equipment, technology and facilities will give dentists and practice teams excellent facilities in which to maximise their skills to ensure we as a region continue to deliver the very best patient care. The centre will increase the opportunities available to all dental health professionals training in the north east.’

The centre has been funded by the North East Strategic Health Authority.