Price rise

The government is to increase the cost for simple and intermediate dental treatment but complex treatment will be frozen at the existing rate. Health minister Alan Johnson has asked the General Dental Council (GDC) to review the costs of treatments, which call into question whether they are fit to practice.

The GDC has changed its criteria for assessing charges so that the cost of a treatment will be based on the amount of time that it will take. The aim of the guidance is to help dental schools and training practices. The GDC is to hold a consultation on standards and will publish a document on the do’s and don’ts of it all.

The GDC has also been told to review the costs of treatments, such as fillings or extractions, which will rise from £44.60 to £45.80. However the maximum charge for ‘complex’ NHS dental treatments, such as the fitting of crowns, bridges or dentures, will be frozen at the existing rate of £198.

Staff cuts

It’s never easy pushing staff out the door when the going gets tough, but it helps if you wise up on the do’s and don’ts of it all.

Dr Scher

Read how one man’s dream of being a busy dental surgeon was turned into reality and which new treatment he is pursuing.

Stay calm

Insomnia, lack of appetite and butterflies in the stomach are all symptoms which turn up just in time for the oral exams, but worry not.

Magic methods

Read how an operation which took two hours and 30 minutes to insert mini-implants into a patient’s mouth was edited down to three minutes.

We want commitment’ say campaigners

Anti-fluoride campaigners are challenging the chief dental officer to accept personal liability, if anyone suffers side effects, when water fluoridation goes ahead in Southampton and other areas that decide to pursue the same policy.

Fluoridation is a hot topic at the moment, after South Central Strategic Health Authority took the decision to add fluoride to the water supply. The Authority will hold a public consultation on the issue.

The process to fluoridate the water supplies of 5.7m Queensland residents began late last year and was introduced by state premier Anna Bligh – great-great-great-granddaughter of William Bligh, the captain of HMS Bounty during the famous mutiny in 1789 – shortly after she took office.

Around 70 per cent of Australians already receive fluoridated water, and Ms Bligh claimed there was no evidence of any side effects and, in the face of opposition, introduced it in her state.

Anti-fluoride campaigners in the UK would like to see a similar commitment to accept personal responsibility from health chiefs here, or senior politicians who have backed fluoride, like Health Secretary Alan Johnson or even Gordon Brown.

Doug Cross, from UK Councils Against Fluoridation, said: ‘Would Mr Brown, or the chief dental officer like to approach a bank and take-out a loan to cover themselves for this? Maybe they would like to offer us their assurances that, like mercury vapour from tooth filings, fluoride is indeed safe, and they will put their own houses and personal wealth on the line as surety for the practice that they are trying to force on the British public?’

Meanwhile in Suffolk, health chiefs are waiting for the results of a tooth decay surgery before it decides whether to use fluoridation to combat tooth caries.

NHS Suffolk’s consultant in dental public health, Richard Ward, said the trust would not make any decision until it got the results from a large survey of tooth decay in five-year-olds in the county.

A white coat, a stethoscope and a confident smile. It’s what you might imagine when you hear the words ‘dental nurse’. It’s also the picture that springs to mind when you think of a job that offers security and a steady income. But is it really the job for you?”

Interview

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‘We want commitment’ say campaigners

He added: ‘The survey will show us where the dental decay is and then we can think about the best way of dealing with it. There are a number of ways of dealing with dental decay such as tooth brushing schemes. We always have fluoridation in mind but it is one of a number of options.’

So far the PCT has not formally discussed fluoridation.

If it decides to go ahead, the East of England Strategic Health Authority will hold a public consultation on the issue.