Dental visits are ‘intimidating’

Even for a dentist, being a dental patient is an integers, intimidating experience,’ according to Professor Jimmy Steele, who is leading an independent review into NHS dentistry in England.

The review group has been asked to report on increasing access across the country, improving quality of services and suggesting how the government may work towards reducing oral health inequalities.

Professor Steele, who is the chair in Oral Health Services Research at the School of Dental Sciences in Newcastle, has revealed in his latest update on the review, his views on being a patient and how difficult as a patient it is to determine the quality of dental care.

‘Professor Steele claims he is ‘not a very good dental patient’ and admitted: ‘For a start, I don’t go a dentist very often, and for a dentist that is probably not unusual (I think we perhaps believe, in my case incorrectly, that we are immune to dental problems).

When I do go, I talk a lot, I want to see what is going on and I do not mind admitting that I don’t like it very much at all; I am nervous.’

Part of the problem is that dentists having treatment ‘know exactly what to expect, I can picture the procedure in some detail and I trust the person treating me to do an excellent job, but that does not stop me wanting to be somewhere else rather than in the dental chair. Even for a dentist, being a dental patient is an intimidating experience.’

One of the things the review team will be examining over the next few weeks is ‘quality’.

Quality can be defined in a myriad of ways, according to Professor Steele, but he added: ‘If the NHS is offering a dental service, it needs to do what it does well. Trying to describe the makeup of a high quality service in this, sometimes intimidating, environment of a dental surgery is not easy. I suppose my point is that patients may feel quite differently about what a quality service is when they are in the surgery compared to when they are not.’

He also believes that a dentist may have a very different version of quality than a patient.

‘As a patient I want a quick, painless experience. As a dentist I know that a good outcome may take a little longer and that to avoid more visits or possibly discomfort in the future, some investment of time at the beginning may be sensible. The NHS needs to balance these two points of view (and many more) and to make sure that all the different aspects of quality that it is trying to satisfy.’

‘It needs to do what it does well. Trying to describe the makeup of a high quality service in this, sometimes intimidating, environment of a dental surgery is not easy. I suppose my point is that patients may feel quite differently about what a quality service is when they are in the surgery compared to when they are not.’

He also believes that a dentist may have a very different version of quality than a patient.

‘As a patient I want a quick, painless experience. As a dentist I know that a good outcome may take a little longer and that to avoid more visits or possibly discomfort in the future, some investment of time at the beginning may be sensible. The NHS needs to balance these two points of view (and many more) and to make sure that all the different aspects of quality that it is trying to satisfy.’

More NHS dentistry

A new NHS dental surgery is hoping to make up for the lack of NHS provision in the area.

Glenside Dental Practice in Pensby, which is opening in April, already has over 1,000 patients registered, said Simon Wright, who is a dental surgery compared to when they are not.’

He also believes that a dentist may have a very different version of quality than a patient.

‘As a patient I want a quick, painless experience. As a dentist I know that a good outcome may take a little longer and that to avoid more visits or possibly discomfort in the future, some investment of time at the beginning may be sensible. The NHS needs to balance these two points of view (and many more) and to make sure that all the different aspects of quality that it is trying to satisfy.’

More NHS dentistry

A new NHS dental surgery is hoping to make up for the lack of NHS provision in the area.

Glenside Dental Practice in Pensby, which is opening in April, already has over 1,000 patients registered, said Simon Wright, who is managing the practice.

Mr Speechley said: ‘We hope that this new collaborative initiative will help to provide the people of Pensby and the surrounding areas with a high-quality, friendly service, under the terms of the NHS.’

He claims that the surgery has the potential to expand. The practice in Pensby Road, which will be one of 55 other NHS surgeries in Wirral, will also provide dental implants and some extensive cosmetic dentistry on a private basis.

MP Stephen Hesford has welcomed the new NHS provision.