The first textbook about dentistry written in English, *Operator for the Teeth* by Charles Allen, was published in 1685, it was a step away from the charlatans in the marketplace of the time, and can be seen as an initial move towards quality assurance. Today, there is much legislation on the subject of ‘Tooth-Ake’, and with the advent of the Care Quality Commission and the GDC’s revalidation scheme, quality assurance in dentistry is set to receive even more attention. The Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK) introduced the Certificate in Appraisal of Dental Practices in 2004 to offer a universal educational approach to quality assurance in primary dental care. In a move that broadens access to the course to the North of England and Scotland, this Spring will see the programme offered for the first time in Scotland, at The Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

**Encouraging team solutions**

A broad range of skills are needed to enable practice appraisals to be carried out in a helpful, sensitive and professional manner, and assessors should be trained in how best to use these skills to effect and manage change. The FGDP(UK) practice appraisal programme trains all members of the dental team to appraise the quality of clinical and non-clinical care delivered in the primary dental care setting. The teaching is outcome-focused and participants undertake three practice appraisals between the initial two contact study days and the third, nine months later. As well as knowledge of current legislation and the skills needed to work with others to evaluate and bring about change, participants learn to identify the issues underlying health care quality, and part of the assessment is based upon reflection on one of these appraisals.

Keith Hayes, a current course participant, says that “each practice visit is unique and offers an opportunity to both parties to benefit from a new experience. Part of the value of a successful appraisal visit is to open the channels of communication in order to focus on these specific opportunities and develop a favourable environment for team solutions.”

The FGDP(UK) Certificate in Appraisal of Dental Practices is available to all dental professionals, and is delivered by two experienced clinicians and appraisers, Patricia Langley and Jerry Watson. As clinical director for Oasis Healthcare, Pat has overall responsibility for quality assurance and clinical governance compliance across the Oasis estate of more than 15 dental practices. Jerry is passionate about the importance of communication skills, teamwork and excellent customer care in general practice, and founded the first dental practice to be accredited with ‘Investors in People’. Both have spent the last 20 years delivering a range of postgraduate programmes.

Applications are invited from all members of the dental team with an interest in quality assurance, either in their own practice or for those tasked with assessing the practices of others. Applications should be received by the 25 April 2010 to avoid disappointment. The course dates are the 7 and 8 May 2010, with a third day to follow on the 4 February 2011, and successful completion of the programme gives 20 ‘management credits’ towards the FGDP(UK) Career Pathway. For more information please contact fgdp-education@rcseng.ac.uk or call 020 7869 6760.