Draft guidance extension

The consultation on draft guidance on students’ fitness to practice has been extended by the General Dental Council.

A spokesman for the General Dental Council (GDC) said: ‘We don’t regulate students. But it is important that student dentists and dental care professionals understand and are committed to the standards required to register with us. These include putting patients’ interests first and acting to protect them, respecting patients’ dignity and choices and being trustworthy.

We want to introduce guidance so teachers, tutors, trainers and lecturers know what to do when they have concerns that a student may not meet the standards required for professional registration.’

The GDC’s proposed expectations of students to show they’re fit to practice include being aware of their own limitations in providing care and knowing when to seek advice or help, making sure they’re supervised appropriately for any clinical tasks they perform, not misleading anyone by misrepresenting their position or abilities and behaving with courtesy.

Frances Garratt, head of Quality Assurance, said: ‘We’ve decided to extend the consultation to make sure as many student dentists, dental care professionals and organisations providing dental education and training give us their views on this important guidance document. We want to make sure our guidance is easy to follow and that putting it in place will be as straightforward as possible.’

The GDC’s Student Fitness to Practise guidance aims to ensure that students have a full understanding and commitment to the standards they will need to follow as dental professionals. The GDC and the other healthcare regulators have developed the guidance in response to the government’s White Paper ‘Trust, Assurance and Safety’.

Student dentists and dental care professionals now have until 5 pm on Friday 21 August to give their opinions on the guidance. The original closing date for the consultation was 26 May.

To read the draft guidance and find out how you can respond to the consultation, go to: www.gdc-uk.org

Simply the best

The British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry’s conference looks set to be ‘the best yet’.

This year’s conference, ‘The Future Of Dentistry’, will be held at the Edinburgh International Conference Centre from 19-21 November and has been structured to ensure that delegates should be able to attend every lecture, seminar or workshop that appeals to them.

A spokeswoman for the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (BACD) said: ‘The perfect combination of informative lectures and rewarding seminars will enable delegates to discover the latest innovations, including new advances in materials, lasers and CAD/CAM technology.’

She added: ‘The response to last year’s event was very positive, with comments including: ‘Best conference yet...’ ‘Excellent atmosphere, great speakers...’ ‘I am leaving the conference feeling re-energised, re-motivated and full of enthusiasm...’.

Delegates are advised to book early for this year’s conference, as many of the workshops have a restricted number of spaces.

Bookings must be made at www.bacd.com, where a special discounted rate is currently available.

For more information contact Suzy Rowlands on 0207 612 4166 or email info@bacd.com

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GDPUK round-up
Tony Jacobs shares the most recent snippets of conversation from his ever-growing GDPUK online community

Wide-ranging topics interested GDPUK members recently, ranging from well-illustrated clinical cases with calls for advice, and the changes arriving with the advent of the Care Quality Commission, to end-of-season football discussions.

The popular conception is that the changes in professional self regulation are all Shipman related, but the New Labour concept of giving power to the people means that GDC [and medical] decisions of disciplinary hearings, even whilst their panels are now dominated by lay people, are still reviewed to ensure they are not too lenient. These can be seen as worrying times, and certainly ‘interesting’. Despite the public perception of the power of the professions, my view is that whatever the leaders of the profession may want regarding regulation, this is another area where our political masters will do exactly as they wish.

Despite the massive national interest in MPs’ expenses claims, this has had little discussion on GDPUK. Sir Paul Beresford, an MP and a dental practitioner did get a mention in the Daily Telegraph, where they alleged he had been claiming second-home parliamentary expenses on his west London flat, which also contains his dental practice. Even this did not raise much comment, support or derision.

During May, all the Steele roadshows were reviewed as they travelled around the country, and although the report may be published quite quickly, dentists do not feel they can trust politicians to act upon the report, or not to use the report to support the present unloved system.

HTM01-05 was again dissected, and a poll showed that almost 90 per cent of those voting saw it as an unnecessary edict, flawed, especially when new research was published in May showing very low rates of transmission of prion-based disease, and that there are expected to be many fewer cases in future.

A colleague posted a view of a radiograph of an ‘ancient’ failing implant, and it was identified on the forum as a blade implant, probably placed in the 1960s, as taught by a dentist named Ronald Cullen. There are not thought to be many of these around.

Do you have many, or any patients who cannot abide mint flavour? I suspect we all have, and suggesting a suitable fluoride containing toothpaste for them is difficult. There are a few natural type products but they tend to not contain fluoride, there are children’s pastes in varying flavours, and the simpler older Sensodyne pastes, often bland.

To find out more call 01691 684135 or visit www.practiceplan.co.uk

About the author

Tony Jacobs, 51 is a GDP in the suburbs of Manchester, in practice with partner Steve Lazarus at 406Dental (www.406dental.com). He has had roles in his LDC, local BDA and with the annual conference of LDCs, and is a local dental adviser for Dental Protection. Nowadays, he concentrates on GDPUK, the web group for UK dentists to discuss their profession online, www.gdpuk.com. Tony founded this group in 1997 which now has around 7,000 unique visitors per month, who make 55,000 visits and generate more than a million pages on the site per month. Tony is sure GDPUK.com is the liveliest and most topical UK dental website.
Scotland ‘hits a high’

The number of NHS dentists in Scotland has hit a record high, according to new figures.

Statisticians show that at the end of March this year, there were 2,759 dentists working in the General Dental Service (GDS) in Scotland - a rise of 0.5 per cent on the previous year and 10.7 per cent since 2007.

Every NHS board in Scotland has seen a rise in the number of dentists with the largest percentage rises being in the mainland boards with Forth Valley at 15.8 per cent, Fife at 15.2 per cent and Tayside at 9.4 per cent, while the biggest increases in numbers were in Greater Glasgow and Clyde with 20, Lothian with 20 and Tayside and Forth Valley both with 21.

Minister for Public Health, Shona Robison, said: ‘This significant rise of 163 dentists in just a year means Scotland now has a record number of NHS dentists.

The Scottish Government is determined to reverse the years of neglect in NHS dentistry.

Since taking office in May 2007, we have worked hard to increase the numbers of adults and children registered with a dentist.’

She added: ‘We have seen the first students begin their studies at the new Aberdeen Dental School, with their state-of-the-art, £21m building due to open soon on NHS Grampian’s Forres terhill site.

And earlier this year, we announced £62m for new primary care facilities across Scotland, which will see 13 new standalone dental centres built across the country, with two more as part of multi-function health centres.’

The percentage of the Scottish population registered with an NHS GDS dentist at December 31, 2008, was 78.7 per cent for children and 59.3 per cent for adults.

There has been a 10 per cent and 18 per cent increase in the number of registrations for children and adults respectively from December 2007 to December 2008.

Double murder charge continues

Police have been searching the land and private lake of a Northern Ireland dentist who has been charged with a double murder.

Dr Colin Howell is in custody charged with the murders, 18 years ago, of his wife Lesley and the husband of his former lover. Their bodies were found in a car filled with exhaust fumes and it was thought they had died in a suicide pact.

However police launched a murder investigation earlier this year after interviewing the dentist.

Divers have been searching a lake close to the luxury home of Dr Colin Howell near Castlerock, Co Londonderry, Dr Howell’s former lover Hazel Stewart, who later remarried, is also charged with the double murder. Her then husband was Constable Trevor Buchanan.

A police spokesman said: ‘Searches are being carried out as part of an ongoing police investigation into serious crime. These searches using specialist resources are concentrated on land and a lake in the grounds of a private house at Castlerock.’

Dr Howell is also being investigated over a series of alleged sex crimes on former patients whom he is said to have drugged and assaulted.

Dr Howell’s second wife Kyle, an American, left Northern Ireland to start a new life in the United States with their 10 children, after Dr Howell’s arrest.

Dr Howell was one of Ireland’s leading implant providers for complex cases and full mouth rehabilitation.

He lectured at Implant conferences in Jordan and tutored final year dental students at Queens University Belfast for Dental Implants.

Welsh dentist goes remote

A dentist from North Wales, has travelled by boat to the most remote inhabited island in the world, to treat the people living there.

Angus Gordon, of Drumhead House, Finzean in Deeside, has travelled to St Helena in the south Atlantic, to cover for another dentist who is going on holiday. Dr Gordon flew RAF Brize Norton Oxford to Ascension Island, where he spent four days until his ship arrived. From there, he took the Royal Mail Ship St Helena to the island itself.

There is no airport on the island and ship is the only means of getting there. RMS St Helena is almost the sole source of supply of all goods to the island.

Everything has to be carried by ship to the island, from wind turbines to automotive parts, sheep, goats, and Christmas turkeys to furniture, food and paint. Dr Gordon has visited the island, which is a UK territory, before, twice in 2007 doing similar work - the first time for nearly three months and the second time for two-and-a-half months.

This time he will stay there for two months before returning to the UK in September. He will work at the island’s 50-bed hospital, under a health scheme financed by the UK’s Department of International Development and managed by the St Helena Government.

He is covering for a South African dentist who is on holiday for two months.

The island has a big diabetes problem that produces a lot of dental health problems and many of the children have dental problems as there is a lack of dental hygiene.

I am looking forward to going back but I wouldn’t want to stay there permanently,’ said Dr Gordon.