A quieter month on the political scene followed the Newsnight watching frenzy in April and early May. The health ministry teams have settled in and gradually news has emerged of developments between the Department of Health and the profession.

The Government has started to lower expectations in terms of the economy for the medium term, while speculation regarding where the axe would fall led to forum members making some suggestions on the types of savings that could be made.

Money matters
What do you think is the most wasteful aspect of public spending in dentistry? Could local practices provide dental access services for a lower cost than the politically inspired Dental Access Centres? Should denture repairs attract no patient charge? What about patient charges for pregnant people? What about molar endodontics? This is a zero UDA treatment, so there is nothing to be saved. However, despite our musings, the decisions will be made by politicians who wish to be re-elected, and this certainly makes them choose soft targets, things that do not affect their constituents.

How about the tick-box culture? Still rife near you? Form after form, from agency after agency, are getting under the skin of GDPUK members. As long as you can prove you have filled in every FP17DC form correctly and ticked every box, somehow it doesn’t seem to matter if the treatment fails. And in a latest self-assessment tool, silly questions are posed for which no one will answer “no” to, for example, whether needles are used only once. The same with Health and Safety – no central or simple process proves this has been done, so the clipboarders have to visit again and again to see the same documents.

Techno babble
Dentists on the forum like to have the odd friendly disagreement on topics other than dentistry, ie Apple versus Microsoft, so the pros and cons of the latest iPhone 4 generated some chat. However, like chatting in a sports club, or pub, people’s differing perceptions of the same item or concept can be illuminating.

There have been a number of clinical cases discussed, one being interesting enough to be suggested for a scientific “write-up”. An image of a radiograph was posted showing a bifid lateral incisor, with a dens invaginatus, and the root was dilacerated too. It was possible that one canal was vital and one non-vital. Very complex, and it was proposed that it could be best solved using the 22nd element of the periodic table – namely titanium!

Latest events
The LDC Conference was held in Harrogate in mid June, and on the forum, there were discussions about the validity and benefits of the event before it occurred, followed by reports during the event, then dissection afterwards. Overall the view was that Chair Richard Emms’ speech was very well received, and that speech was published in full.

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GDPUK round-up
The GDPUK online community this month sees a flurry of conversation on public spending, says Tony Jacobs

About the author
Tony Jacobs, 52, is a GDP in the suburbs of Manchester, in practice with partner Steve Lazzarus at 406 Dental. Tony founded GDPUK 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. Tony is sure GDPUK.com is the liveliest and most topical UK dental website.