Queen fan

Queen guitarist Brian May aid he was ‘delighted’ to sup- port a music festival held in memory of a dentist who was an ardent fan.

Ten bands appeared at the festi- val in Wichenford near Worces- ter, playing Queen tracks as part of the set.

The festival was held in mem- ory of John Bue, who worked at the Green Dental Practice in Dines Green, and died in a mo- torcycle crash in June.

The organisers of the concert contacted Brian May and told him about the festival. He said he was ‘delighted to support the festival’ and sent signed Queen merchandise for the raffle.

He also sent his condolences to Dr Bue’s wife and their two daughters.

Wedding teeth

A man on the Isle of Wight was told by his father-in-law to be that he could only marry his daughter if he got his teeth fixed. Thirty-two year-old Gordon Taylor was told by Dr Philip Lewis, that he would have to have fillings and cosmetic surgery.

For the wedding, which was held in Cowes, Mr Taylor wore a ‘snap-on smile’ cosmetic den- ture. Dr Lewis, revealed that when he first met his daugh- ter’s new boyfriend he was ‘horified’ by the sight of his teeth.

Fake qualifications

A dentist has pleaded not guilty to allegations he used fake qualifications including a fake Bachelor of Dental Surgery de- gree, enabling her to work in NHS hospitals for eight years. Vinisha Sharma pleaded not guilty to a total of 10 charges at Wolverhampton Crown Court.

The 36-year-old is due to stand trial on March 8 following an investigation carried out by the NHS Counter Fraud and Secu- rity Management Service.

Sharma has pleaded not guilty to charges of using a fake Bach- elor of Dental Surgery degree, a certificate saying she had completed a course on aesthet- ics and a certificate of registra- tion from the Punjab Dental Council.

She has also denied five counts of obtaining pecuniary advan- tage by deception, one while with Royal Wolverhampton NHS Trust.

Sharma also denied fraud by false representation.

The charges cover a period of eight years from 2000 to 2008. Sharma has been granted bail.

www.dental-tribune.co.uk

UDA value variation highlighted by Tories

The shadow health secretary, Andrew Lansley, claimed that the wide variation in pay for UDAs shows the system is not working.

He said: “It must be hugely frustrating for many dentists to know that others just down the road are being paid so much more for doing very similar work.

The contract the government has introduced for NHS dentists needs a complete overhaul if we are to turn things around. We need to give our NHS dentists a better system in which to work if people are to get the dental care they need.

That’s why a Conservative gov- ernment would scrap Labour’s flawed UDA system and introduce a fairer system for dentists and pa- tients.”

John Milne, chair of the BDA’s General Dental Practice Com- mittee, concurred that the value of units of dental activity does “vary according to the historical earnings and activity of practi- tioners, the provision of special- ist services and the oral health needs of each PCT’s population”.

He said: “These factors lead to a variation in values, although the national average is around £25.”

He added that “the main flaw with the current dental contract is the way it is centred on targets, rather than providing high-qual- ity care to patients. It’s important now that the conclusions of Pro- fessor Steele’s review are con- sulted on and piloted so that a new system can be developed that works for patients and prac- titioners alike.”

Derek Watson, chief execu- tive of the Dental Practitioners Association, said: “The idea that dentists can be paid differ- ent amounts for carrying out the same courses of treatment is based on the assumption that costs vary and that different dentists do different amounts of treatment in the same course (and will continue to do so).

The amount of work in each course has now stabilised at the lowest common denominator and costs do not vary enough to justify one dentist earning ten times more than another dentist for a UDA.”

He criticised the process of tendering claiming it “is no sub- stitute for the free market as it is slow, inefficient and frequently unfair”.

A DH spokesperson said: “The dental contract is working – the number of dentists working in the NHS is growing and more people have seen an NHS dentist in the last year.

“PCTs have control over how much they pay for a unit of dental activity – it is only right that this can vary depending on local challenges and needs.

Some figures may also reflect the income guarantee which helps to keep dentists in the NHS when the dental contract was introduced in 2006.”

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The figures showing the wide disparity in pay come from a number of Freedom of Informa- tion requests put to primary care trusts by the Tories.

The figures show much the minimum and the maximum each trust pays for a unit of den- tal activity (UDA).

In Westminster Primary Care Trust (PCT), the figures show that the maximum paid for a UDA is £105.38 and the minimum £20.19.

However in Sandwell, a rela- tively deprived area in the West Midlands, the range is from £11.08 per UDA up to a maximum of £45.83.

Doncaster PCT is shown to pay a uniform £26.35 per UDA.

Since the new contract came in 2006, dentists are paid a flat rate covering the amount of work they are contracted to do each year, which is measured in units of dental activity (UDAs).

The actual cash value of a UDA is set by the local NHS Primary Care Trust in England or the Local Health Board in Wales, in discus- sion with the dental practice.

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