Dental services continue to grow

Despite the credit crunch, demand for dental services continues to grow, according to the British Dental Trade Association (BDTA). Last month it was announced that more than one million units of dental activity had been commissioned by PCTs in the past year and many new practices opened.

A BDTA spokesman said: ‘Dentists are increasing their spending, although how much of this is accounted for by NHS expenses or because of increased private sector spending cannot be known accurately. Over half the increase results from single-use endodontic instruments, as well as oral hygiene and headpieces.

“This points to trends towards cross-infection prevention and control and practices will need to review their equipment and materials, in order to fulfil new requirements.’

Although many dentists feel that effective prevention is no more deliverable under the new contract, it still remains an NHS aspiration, with a Toolkit produced last year to encourage expansion of preventative practices.

- Private dentistry
  The really big trend in dentistry is the growth of the private sector over the last ten years, according to BDTA. Figures showed more than half of dentists’ income comes from private work. The recent Healthcare Commission’s survey of patients’ views on primary care showed that, although half the population visited a dentist under the NHS, about a quarter saw a dentist privately, with the rest not going regularly.

- Laboratories
  Dental laboratories lost more than 50 per cent of the amount of NHS work ordered by practices since the first year of the new contract. A recent survey of laboratory owners found a major impact was the shift from NHS to private work. On average, owners reported 45 per cent of turnover came from private cases, with one-fifth only doing private work.

- Regulation and education
  Since August, all dental team members must now be registered with the General Dental Council (GDC). There is also a move towards increased PCT regulation, but a major development is the Care Quality Commission, which will oversee both NHS and private practices.

In 2008 compared to 50 per cent last year. Private work grew to 54 per cent in 2008 from 50 per cent in 2007. About 50 per cent of labs said that at least 80 per cent of turnover came from private cases, with one-fifth only doing private work.

Teeth brushing could reduce heart attack risk

A new study claims that thorough teeth brushing not only reduces the risk of tooth decay, but also cuts the risk of a heart disease.

Previous studies showed an unexplained link between gum disease and the increased likelihood of suffering from heart disease or a stroke. But a team has now discovered that the organism’s defence mechanism can sometimes destroy its own protective cells by over-responding to gum-disease. This can lead to atherosclerosis, a cause of heart attacks.

A team led by Greg Seymour of the University of Otago in New Zealand uncovered the link, after observing how intensive brushing affected people with cardiovascular disease.

He said: ‘An understanding of all the possible risk factors could help lower the risk of developing heart disease and lead to a significant change in disease burden.’

The study’s findings will be discussed at the Society for General Microbiology’s Autumn meeting at Trinity College, Dublin.

Sparse dental care for Hayling Island

People living on Hayling Island are struggling to find dental care in the area.

Out of the Island’s total population of around 17,000, only around 3,500 people per year receive NHS treatment.

With only four dentists working on Hayling, many NHS patients are forced to travel to the mainland.

Even patients who are registered privately with dentists on the island may have to wait weeks for treatment, unless they are in pain.

The two dental practices on the Island do not have the facilities to take on any more patients, whether NHS or private and waiting times are up to six weeks during the summer.

The House of Commons’ Select Committee report on dental services, published on June 23, said the Government’s recent overhaul of dentists’ contracts, which promised to increase preventative treatments, had actually had the opposite effect.

Sky dives for Charity

Supporters of oral health charity, Denplan, raised more than £5,000 through a sponsored sky dive. The recent event at Western on the Green airfield, near Oxford, was organised as part of the Denplan Dentaid partnership.

The jumpers, who were attached to a professional parachute instructor, were launched from the plane at 10,000 feet.

Denplan’s fundraising assistant, Felicity Patterson, said: ‘It was an amazing experience that I will never forget. It was exciting, exhilarating and scary, the views were amazing and I did feel safe with my instructor, who had worked as a stunt double on some big films.

‘Well done and thank you to all of you who took part. This event has raised cash for Denplan’s work to improve the oral health of disadvantaged communities throughout the world. We are currently sending equipment and instruments to projects in Peru, Cambodia and Uganda.

Denplan’s Michael Rudman said: ‘Denplan Essentials is such a popular product and Essentials Direct now makes it quick and easy for patients looking for a dentist to sign up with. It is great for the patient as they don’t have to make a special trip into the practice. It is also great for the dentist, because they don’t have to take time away from their patients to market the service in their surgery and can develop their business with the minimum of effort.’

For more information phone: 0800 528 5225 or log onto: www.denplan.co.uk

Dr Matthews: ‘Denplan will continue to show its support.’
Sometimes people think that big companies aren’t interested in NHS dental practices, my experience of Henry Schein Minerva is just the opposite. They have encouraged and supported us in many ways, providing an excellent staff training programme which has really helped develop our personnel. We now have an established facility that provides outstanding care for our patients, all made possible by the first class service we receive from Henry Schein Minerva.”

Yemi Opaleye – Tetbury Dental Practice, Tetbury

Partnership in Practice

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