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 encouraging 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 BMA and Customs figures showed more than half of dentists’ income came 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 during 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.

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.

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 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, who took part in the sky dive, 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.

Dentalaid is planning two sky dives next year on May 22 in Brackley, Northamptonshire and on July 5 in Lancaster. For a registration pack, email info@denplanaid.org.

Denplan launches Essentials Direct

Leading UK dental plan provider, Denplan, has launched a new online service called, Essentials Direct to enable dentists to grow their business.

Up to 9,000 patients a month use Denplan’s, Find a Dentist, search facility at www.denplan.co.uk, and they can now sign up to the Essentials Direct dental plan immediately.

Essentials Direct is specifically designed to enable dentists to increase their Denplan Essentials patient numbers, without having to actively promote the scheme in their practices.

Jolly good Fellows

Two leading figures in the dental profession have received Fellowships from the prestigious Edinburgh Royal College of Surgeons in recognition of their support to postgraduate education.

Dr Roger Matthews, chief dental officer, for Denplan together with Dr Mike Busby, a consultant trainer for over 18 years, received their Fellowships from the dean of the Faculty, Professor Jonathan Cowpe.

Commenting on the award, Dr Matthews said: ‘As a significant stakeholder within the profession, Denplan has and will continue to sponsor dental conferences, seminars and study days at all UK colleges, maintaining a dialogue with and support for the Faculty at a time of continuing turbulence for the profession in the UK.’

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 328 3223 or log onto: www.denplan.co.uk.

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 5,000 people per year receive NHS treatment.

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

Even patients who are registered privately with dentists on the mainland 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 preventive treatments, had actually had the opposite effect.

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.’

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“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

To develop your partnership
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