News & Opinions

Dental Fees Freeze

The price of fuel, food and life’s other basic necessities may be rising, but at least one thing is staying the same in 2009, which is the cost of registration renewal with the General Dental Council, (GDC).

The council agreed at its meeting in Belfast earlier this month not to increase its registration fees next year.

GDC President Hew Mathewson reminded us that we are in the grip of a credit crunch and life is getting tougher for people. Costs may be increasing elsewhere, but I’m pleased to say that the GDC has, after a period of time, built up its reserves and we can manage the budget effectively for the coming year without increasing fee levels.

The fees freeze means that the cost of annual registration renewal remains at £438 for dentists and £96 for dental care professionals. The cost of being on a GDC’s specialist list stays at £52.

The GDC also agreed to change the registration renewal date for groups of dental professionals – dental hygienists, dental therapists, clinical dental technicians and orthodontic therapists - to July every year rather than December, to bring them into line with dental nurses and technicians.

The four groups will be required to pay £56 for seven months registration, in December 2008 to take them through to the end of July next year. They will then pay a full year’s registration through to the end of July 2010. This will synchronise all Dental Care Professionals (DCPs) onto the same annual renewal cycle.

The annual fees payable are as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Registrant</th>
<th>Annual retention fee (ARF)</th>
<th>Application fee</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dentist</td>
<td>£438 due in December 2008</td>
<td>£658 if registering in January. From February, £57 per month until December 2009 when ARF is due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialists</td>
<td>£8 per month until July 2009 when ARF is due</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dental nurses and dental technicians</td>
<td>Dental nurses and dental technicians have paid for their first year of registration already. Their first ARF of £8 per month until July 2009.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dental hygienists, dental therapists, clinical dental technicians and orthodontic therapists</td>
<td>£56 due in December 2008 for the seven months ending July 2009, to synchronise all DCPs onto same cycle. The ARF of £96 will then be due in July 2009.</td>
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Dental Centre for 3,000 patients

A £9m state-of-the-art dental centre in Portsmouth is set to treat up to 3,000 NHS patients annually.

The Dental Outreach Centre, due to open in 2010, will train 80 students a year as dentists, dental therapists, hygienists and dental nurses.

A partnership between the University of Portsmouth and King’s College London Dental Institute, the centre will provide treatment to people from across south-east Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.

Final-year dental students from King’s College will conduct 10-week supervised clinical placements at the new centre, which is funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the NHS, the University of Portsmouth and King’s College London’s Dental Institute.

Professor John Craven, vice-chancellor of the University of Portsmouth, said: ‘We are very proud to be involved in a project which brings such tangible benefits to people, both to students learning and to oral health in the community.’

Current forecasts predict that two-thirds of Portsmouth adults will not be registered with an NHS dentist by 2010. The new dental partnership is designed to remedy that situation, by providing high-quality NHS dental treatment in an area of generally very poor dental health and oral hygiene, particularly in some inner-city areas.

The centre will be housed in a brand new building linked to the University of Portsmouth’s, School of Professionals Complementary to Dentistry, in Hampshire Terrace.

Popular NHS dentist dies

A popular NHS dentist from Wiltshire has died at the age of 50.

Dr Michael Frain was born in Bristol and attended St Benedict’s College and Bristol University, where he studied dental surgery.

His company owned and ran dental practices across the south-west of England, including practices in Chippenham, Melksham, Calne and Swindon, with more than 40,000 NHS patients on its books.

Dr Frain built up a dental practice which included 17 dentists before opening the Bell Barn practice in Stone Bishop in Bristol in 2004.
Are you sitting comfortably?

Adding some new chairs is a great way to revamp a tired waiting room, make the patient’s experience comfortable and keep them coming back. Kathy Adams offers some interior design ideas

S

teating is an important part of the welcome your patients receive in your reception or waiting room area. Providing your patients with an inviting, comfortable and warm area to wait in, will not only boost your practice image, it will also help encourage your patients to want to return.

Furniture can also be used to create and project your practice’s chosen image. The type of furniture you choose will give a certain atmosphere to a room. For example, choosing clean, modern furniture can create an uncluttered, contemporary and airy ambiance. So it’s good to explore the options before you buy, and think about what kind of mood you like to set.

Choosing a style

Patients’ requirements should always be considered when choosing chairs – after all, they will be sitting in them. Elderly patients may prefer a more supportive and higher chair, that’s easy to get in and out of, so it’s a good idea to have at least one chair with arms in your waiting space. Low seating creates a more luxurious and relaxing environment and can be suitable if you have a private patient base.

You might choose to create several different spaces, similar to that in a hotel lounge, with a variety of seats to meet the needs of a varied patient base. You could enhance the areas with low tables, a selection of magazines and the appropriate lighting to create the mood you would like to portray.

Occupy your younger visitors with small, fun seating. The furniture can be arranged to create a children’s area and can utilise a small awkward corner very well. Keeping the children busy can help to ensure a quiet and peaceful wait for all your patients, giving parents time to enquire at reception or fill in forms should they need to. For difficult small spaces, banquette or upholstered seating is a good choice.

Space-saving ideas

Stackable chairs work well in waiting and reception rooms. Popular for their versatility, they can be stored away leaving wait-
ing spaces open for staff meetings and events, as well as making sure all floor surfaces are cleaned thoroughly.

With such a variety of fabrics available for chair upholstery, an easily cleanable or a Scotch-guarded fabric that gives resistance to spills, for example, is ideal for waiting room areas. A vinyl or leather would be my choice, as it will look good for longer, is cost-effective and available in different colours.

Investing in a relaxing environment can go a long way to attracting more revenue from both returning and new patients. Remember, you are purchasing for a commercial space and not a domestic environment. Ideally your seating should meet BS EN 12727 contract level three to stand up to the usage of a public space such as a busy practice.

Don’t ignore your chairs

About the author

Kathy Adams is design director at Admor. For more information, contact Admor on 01273 550078 or visit www.admor.co.uk.

OPTIMA MX INT - All in one!

The next generation of Digipad from Bien-Air offers even more features, whilst still being really easy to use. 40 programs are available - 20 Operative and 20 for Endodontics. It is pre-programmed with the correct speeds and torque settings for most dental procedures and the complete set of Pro-Taper endodontic file settings.

Design and ergonomics: Optima MX INT can be easily integrated into most Dental Units. Visibility is greatly improved by the new, larger screen. Its unique new mounting system allows the screen orientation to be adjusted for optimum visibility in all situations.

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