ARF - Your Views

We asked for your comments, and we got them...

I find it despicable that we pay for the running of this inept organisation and have no say as to how they are run or how they spend my money. And in addition they have no real teeth, or are about to become even more loutish, when the new CQC thing takes over, which is an issue that is beyond imagination.

Brian Rubin, East Sussex

When the rise in ARF happened a few years ago, I was incensed and wrote to the GDC. I explained that I work part-time in Community Dental Services - why should I pay the same GDC is. I wonder what the real role of the title "Doctor" makes one intend to remove the use of increases. This on top of the action against these excessive fees could possibly makepeople think twice about choosing dentistry as their chosen career.

Dr Cate Jarrold, Aldershot

What are we paying for? It seems that bureaucracy has gone mad. How can they warrant a rise of 25 per cent in times of recession when dentists are finding a lower footfall into their practices with addition of CQC inspection at a cost to the practice of around £1,500 (what registered laser practices have been paying)? For many practices this will have an effect on their ability to continue with NHS contracts and unsustainable. If a dentist wishes to practice, he or she must register with this body, the GDC, which represents a monopoly in that regard. Monopolies are insensitive and uncompetitive, with a relaxed attitude to their captive audiences’ plights.

The GDC gets a large number of frivolous complaints, but almost everything goes to first stage of litigation. I recently endured a frivolous complaint, which was eventually thrown out. Although the GDC came to the correct conclusion; the process was cumbersome and resulted in hours of work for my defence lawyers. I was stressed for months. I would have appreciated a call from someone at the GDC to explain the process, which was unrelating and disturbing to me. Instead I received a threatening letter accusing me of six major breaches of my duty of care to patients, based on the say so of one individual.

The GDC is out of touch. In my opinion, the increase in GDC retention fees is a reflection of their lack of innovation in dealing with increased complaints, and a failure to budget correctly. The GDC should be pursuing costs against those people who make frivolous complaints, and using the monies acquired to balance the budget. They've already grabbed millions from dental nurses and other DCPS, and yet still claim it’s not enough. Something is very wrong with that. It feels to most dentists that we are being forced to pay for a body which likes to punish us whenever it can. The voice of the public drowns out the voice of the profession, the majority of who are caring and conscientious and doesn't need a big stick to put patients' interest first.

I suppose the extra money will come in useful for their misguided and maladvised campaign to prevent dentists using the courtesy title Dr!

Dr Martin Edwards, Dental Surgeon

I think it is absolutely disgraceful that the GDC have put the ARF up for DCPS. As we are all aware, DCPS are made up of dental hygienists, therapists, technicians and dental nurses; all of whom earn different amounts of money. Why should dental nurses, most of whom earn nothing compared to the likes of dental hygienists and therapists, have to pay the same ARF?

The GDC will not even consider, it seems, a pay monthly scheme for the ARF, even though this would greatly reduce the burden of paying the now £120 out of our meagre pay packets. Surely the GDC should come to some sort of an arrangement where the ARF is based on the registrant's earnings or at least lowered for dental nurses? The rising cost of the ARF as well as indemnity insurance, the cost of CPD and the lack of decent wages for dental nurses could very well drive more dental nurses away from the profession.

Flustered Practice Manager

This is nothing but extortion and we are paying for the failings/incompetence within the GDC as well as those DCPS who did not re-register this year. The GDC need to get their act together and manage their finances, as we have to do in our businesses. Shame we cannot put up our prices by 35 per cent! My anger cannot be put into words.

Name and address supplied

We are paying for the miscalculation of the management of the ARF over the past few years. Every project they have undertaken has become unnecessarily complex and expensive. Revaluation should be dumped before it gets completely out of hand.

Jenny Pinder

On my wages I can barely afford the current fee. As this is coming into force 2011 I think it would be a good idea if GDC introduced the option paying this in monthly instalments via direct debit. You can pay pretty much everything else (car insurance, house insurance etc) via instalments so I think this option would be welcomed. I know there are a lot of DCPS on a lower wage than me who would struggle and the new fees could possibly makepeople think twice about choosing dentistry as their chosen career.

Kate Powell

Why has the CQC not yet decided what the registration should be for their enforced membership? They are waiting to see what the GDC can get away with. Today I have to take time out to go to a compulsory talk about self-regulation. No fee for this, but no compensa tion for loss of UDA time either. Retirement? Foreign climes? etc, I feel this is discrimination against women. I still feel very angry about this stupid ruling.

Jenny Pinder

Somebody please outline the justification for this 51 per cent increase for the ARF when there are fees payable for another regulatory body on the way. Is the wine cellar looking empty at the GDC?

Name and address supplied

Is it reasonable? The industry is in a recession and we are being asked to pay more. I do think that as the GDC is a monopoly the case for increase of its ARF should be referred to the trade's commissioner, I know that I personally have not received any increase in revenue this year and it will be financially difficult for the average dental technician to pay these fees.

Name and address supplied

It's a disgrace! The GDC are helping themselves to a 51 per cent pay increase at a time when every one else is tightening their belts.

The GDC already charge more than the General Medical Council, who charge £420 per annum (www.gmc-uk.org/doc tor/fees.aspx). It should be noted that the GMC also give a 50 per cent discount for registrants who have a low income - such as those on further studies.

Some minutes from a GDC finance committee meeting give a few clues as to where the money goes; (www.gdc-uk.org/ NB/ndonyres/F4666199-4064-4D74-8453-E96C70E7445B/0/1 51200MinutesConfirmedweb.pdf). The highlights point to lax procedures for approving expenses, lack of budget planning and having consultants to review their current final Sal ary Pension Scheme which had a deficit from last year. It also mentions planning permission for developing Wimpole - the lavish central London offices.

Are they really on the same planet as us? 51 per cent fees hike, final salary pension schemes? Have they been somewhere else for the last few years? I amazed me to find out that they still have a final salary pension scheme - even open to new recruits. I'm not sure how pleased most dentists would be to realise this is how the ARF is spent.

This isn’t professional self-regulation - it’s difficult to describe their behaviour using civilised language? Maybe it’s time to abandon "self-regulation" and allow the profession to be regulated more sensibly by the HPC. I for one can find better ways to spend £500 per annum than someone else's pension scheme, expenses, and flashy offices.

Name and address supplied

A rise of 25 per cent in the ARF is appalling for dental nurses. Unlike hygienists and technicians the salary scale of qualified dental nurses is still quite dreadful and an insult after working for two years - attending a course and working in their own time - to then be able to qualify. As a hygienist with FETC, I have in the past tutored dental nurse students and qualified dental nurses studying for their Oral Health Education Certificate, and I was surprised at the syllabus content for both of the qualifications. Perhaps the dental nurses' professional body should try and educate dentists and fight strongly for better salaries.

Barbara Jones, RDH