Thousands of dental care professionals risk paying more if they do not register with the General Dental Council in the next few months, the body has warned. Registration fees for dental care professionals are to increase by almost £100 in 2008 when registration becomes compulsory under the law.

The annual fee paid by dental hygienists, therapists and technicians will go from £24 to £96 next year, the General Dental Council (GDC) revealed last month. It is urging dental care professionals (DCPs) who have not yet registered to apply now and save money.

The GDC set the 2008 fee levels for all those dental professionals required to register with them at a public meeting in Cardiff in September. All existing dental care professionals must register with the GDC by July 2008.

Since August 2008 more than 7,200 new DCPs have registered on top of the 6,130 already registered at the end of that year. But the Council said ‘thousands’ had yet to get their application forms in with less than a year before the deadline.

It is urging DCPs to send off forms as soon as possible to save money and ensure that they do not find themselves operating illegally after the cut-off point. Those that register before January 2008 will pay the existing fee of £72 and will have no more to pay until their first annual retention fee is due in July 2009, the GDC has explained.

‘The message to dental nurses and dental technicians is clear—act now, pay the current lower fee and avoid the increase in line with inflation, the GDC said.‘The fee levels for 2008 reflect the true costs of delivering effective regulation and the job of maintaining high standards within dentistry,’ said Mr Mathewson. The GDC also announced it was introducing new annual charges of £52 for a year for specialist dentists and a new £250 initial registration fee for some groups.

Here has previously been a first registration fee of £125 for the orthodontics specialist list and the oral surgery specialist list, said a spokesman. ‘Inclusion on the other 13 specialist lists has been free in the past, up until 2008 when the £250 fee will apply.’

The council said the new annual fees needed to cover the costs of maintaining the lists and running a telephone and an email inquiry service for the many people looking for specialist dentists.

Application forms and more information about DCP registration can be found at www.gdc-uk.org. Alternatively phone 0207 827 3000 or email GDCregistration@gdc-uk.org to request forms directly.

### Endodontic instruments could transmit vCJD, say scientists

Scientists could not rule out the risk of the human form of ‘mad cow disease’ being transmitted during root canal treatment, it was warned.

Peter Bennett and Dr Peter Grove of the Department of Health (DoH) published a paper entitled ‘Endodontic reamers and files should only be used once’ in a recent edition of the journal Dental Tribune.

‘Endodontic files should be used only once says Bennett.‘Although there are no known cases of “very crude”. The report says: ‘The risks considered here may be considerably smaller than as presented or simply not exist. On the other hand, the “reasonable worst case scenarios” presented here are also considerably smaller than as present- ed in the reasonable worst case scenario.’

The DoH website at www.dh.gov.uk has guidance on how to deal with the risk of spreading variant Creutzfeld-Jakob Disease (vCJD) between patients.

**Bullish DCPs trained to offer stop smoking advice**

Dental professionals in Bolton are to be trained up to offer advice to smokers who come in for teeth check-ups. The training, which will mainly be given to dental nurses at NHS dental surgeries, will be pulled out over the next two years.

The move is part of wider efforts within the NHS to get dentists and dental care professionals involved in supporting patients to stop smoking. This summer the DoH launched guidance for primary care dental teams, which said most dental practices should offer advice and point patients to smoking cessation sessions run by their local primary care trust.

However, the document—Smoking and smoking, said some practices may want to go a step further by having staff trained to offer more detailed advice and support.

### Chewing gums approved by US dentists

A range of sugar free chewing gums has been given the stamp of approval by US dentists because they can help fight tooth decay. The American Dental Association (ADA) Council on Scientific Affairs awarded its Seal of Acceptance to three products made by confectionery giant Wrigley.

The Orbit, Extra and Eclipse chewing gums were subject to a tough review process. Manufacturers who wish to be considered for the ADA Seal of Approval must submit information including objective data from laboratory and clinical studies and a full list of ingredients. The council looked at studies that showed chewing the gum for 20 minutes after meals helps increase saliva production.

Saliva helps wash away plaque acid and bacteria in minerals such as calcium, phosphorus and fluoride known to strengthen tooth enamel and help prevent cavities. Other products that have gained the ADA Seal of Approval include toothbrushes, toothpastes, dental floss and mouth rinses.