Clawback payments reach £120m

Social network site launch

**DDU awards the innovative teachers**

A trio of inspiring and innovative teachers won awards at this year’s Dental Defence Union Educational Awards.

Alison Grant at Bristol Dental School, won the award for DCP (dental care professional) Teacher of the Year. Ms Grant said: ‘It’s great to receive this recognition. I was first inspired to go into dentistry by the enthusiasm of a hygienist who treated me as a teenager and I want to thank her. DCP teachers are not just teaching students to pass an exam; we are teaching them to become dental hygienists and I believe that communicating our enthusiasm is an essential part of this.’

The award for Dental Teacher of the Year was won by Professor Dayananda Samarawickrama at Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry.

Professor Samarawickrama dedicated the award to his students, colleagues and school and said: ‘I have been humbled by this experience and I’m obviously very pleased to have won. My late father used to say that education is the best gift one can give so it is particularly important to me that I have won this award for my work as a teacher.’

While Stephen Brookes of the Oxford Deanery scraped the Vocational Teacher of the Year award. He said: ‘It’s very gratifying to be recognised by my peers for all my efforts over the past 12 months and the previous 18 years. I’d like to thank my vocational trainees, my course advisor and the Oxford Deanery. Having been nominated a couple of years ago, it’s wonderful to have actually won the award this time.’

Rupert Hoggenhouwers, head of the DDU (Dental Defence Union) praised the winners and said: ‘Their commitment to dental education over many years and their level of experience is clearly crucial in enabling them to communicate effectively with their students and trainees (vocational dental practitioners) in the classroom or surgery.

They provide an informed and invaluable source of advice and guidance to young dental professionals at the start of their careers.’

The winner in each awards category received £1,000 towards the cost of educational materials for their schools or Vocational Training (VT) schemes.

The theme of the day was ‘Education, Ethics and Aesthetics’ and after the finalists presentations, Derek Willmott, professor of orthodontics at Sheffield University and dean of the faculty of dental surgery and Richard Ashcroft, professor of bioethics at Queen Mary University of London addressed the issue of what is purely cosmetic dentistry and where aesthetic treatments may have a therapeutic outcome.

Nicholas Peacock, a barrister from Hamiltons Chambers, spoke about the factors to bear in mind when providing cosmetic treatment, to help avoid a complaint to the General Dental Council or a claim.

The ‘bolched contract’ is forcing dentists to give back £120m to the NHS because all the targets agreed with local health authorities have fallen short of the targets and will have to pay money back to their local health authorities.

The British Dental Association fears these clawbacks may put some practices out of business and could lead to more dentists quitting the NHS.

Figures obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by DT/DPAS, provider of dental insurance that supports practices in offering innovative plans, reveals that although thousands of dentists are still on waiting lists for NHS treatment, five million fewer treatments were carried out in 2007-08 than were budgeted for by the health service.

In Leicester, for example, more than 20 per cent of UDLAs (units of dental activity) have not been delivered and 21 dental practices face repayments of £50,000 or more. Across the country, 89 per cent of primary care trusts responded to a survey that found a total of 414 contracts were targeted where contracts were missed by £50,000 or more.

Peter Ward, the chief executive of the BDA, said that dentists who failed to meet their targets in the first year were likely to have failed to do so again last year, creating a ‘roll-over effect’.

He said: ‘Once again this highlights problems with a target-driven contract that contains one crude measure of performance, which has long been critised by the profession and patient representatives.’

Quentin Skinner, the chairman of DPAS, said: ‘For those dentists who fell rather short of the mark, the future for them in the NHS certainly looks bleak.’

Mike Penning, Shadow Health Minister, said: ‘These figures show, yet again, why we need to rip up Labour’s bolched contract and move towards a registration system based on clinical need, one that guarantees all patients receiving dental ill health rather than reacting to it. The BDA requested an amnesty for dentists who had completed a significant amount – but not all – of their units of dental activity (UDA) for 2006/07.

However the Department of Health has said it will not consider waiving financial clawbacks for dentists.

A social networking site has been launched for dentists.

Dentist Network is a social network dedicated to the dental profession. The site provides related content to dental practitioners, and users are encouraged to interact by providing and uploading their own video and picture content, along with polls, blogs and forums.

Dentist Network (www.dentist-networks.com) has already attracted keen interest from dentistry students using the site as a resource to study and learn from fully trained professionals. Dentist Network has also joined forces with the International Association of Dental Students (IADS) giving members the chance to network globally over their common profession.

Tomaz Spindle, president of the IADS said: ‘I’ve devised the idea of the website as soon as I saw it. It is fantastic that such a resource has been created and will be a huge benefit to dentistry students worldwide, allowing them to connect and compare practices and procedures, as well as get first-hand advice from those in the know.’

However Barry Cockcroft, Chief Dental Officer claimed that the ‘access statistics are old’ and said: ‘They cover a two-period looking backwards that does not reflect the extra £20m investment in NHS dentistry this year and all the new NHS dental services that are opening now.’

He added: ‘Our latest figures show there were 655 more NHS dentists in 2007/08 than in the previous year. There are now 40 new NHS dental practices opening all the time with dental companies as well as individual dentists bidding to provide more NHS dental services around the country. This proves our reforms are working.’