Is the ‘uplift’ really a pay cut for dentists?

BDA warns that percentage increase may not be all it seems

The NHS Employers organisation and the General Practitioners Committee (GPC) of the BMA have agreed changes to the General Medical Services contract for 2011/12 for England, Scotland and Wales.

The new contract states that: For 2011/12 the overall value of GMS Contract payments will rise by 0.5 per cent, to support practices in meeting the costs of increased expenses, including pay increases for employed staff with a full time equivalent salary of less than £21,000. This uplift will be delivered in England through a 2.31 per cent increase in the value of a QOF point (from £12.729 to £13.031).

This increase in the value of a QOF point is intended to deliver the full 0.5 per cent expenses increase. There will be no increase to global sum payments or to the value of DESs.

The British Dental Association (BDA) has said however that the Department of Health’s announcement of a 0.5 per cent increase in contract values for general dental practitioners in England for 2011/12 is a pay cut that will negatively affect their ability to invest in patient care.

The BDA demonstrated in its evidence to the Department of Health that expenses in dental practice are increasing sharply, but the BDA has said that their warning has been disregarded.

Dentists are also being asked to implement new best practice guidance for preventing oral disease in children in support of the Government’s aim of reducing levels of oral disease in younger patients. Where it is considered appropriate, parents will be offered the opportunity for their children to have fluoride varnish applied to their teeth.

John Milne, Chair of the BDA’s General Dental Practice Committee, said: “The level of this uplift is simply not enough. Dentists across England are working really hard, through a period of uncertainty, to deliver high quality care to their patients.

“They are contending with a growing mountain of pointless bureaucracy and escalating costs on top of the effects of the efficiency savings imposed last year. They need help to address those problems.

“While we support this prevention-focused activity to improve young people’s oral health, the costs of providing the extra fluoride varnish to children have not been recognised by this uplift.

“The NHS rightly seeks to improve the quality of dental services and to increase the emphasis on disease prevention, but this cannot be done in an environment where not only are dentists incomes frozen, but the continued failure to reimburse expenses puts practices under severe financial pressure.”

---

News in Brief

Justin Bieber’s gone dental
Teen singer Justin Bieber has cornered a previously uncharted market with the launch of his very own singing toothbrushes. The electric toothbrushes, which are to be launched on July 1st from Ashtel Dental, will come in two designs; one a Bieber-themed oral care merchandise, which has been produced by the company; these include an adult toothbrush, floss and travel kit - which includes a mini hourglass timer and a tongue scraper.

Gum disease and anaemia
A new study suggests that chronic periodontitis may cause a reduction in red blood cells and haemoglobin leading to the blood disorder anaemia. The research, published in the Journal of Periodontology, found that more than a third of people suffering from severe gum disease had haemoglobin levels below normal concentrations. Following a six-month course of treatment these people improve their oral health, all patients had improved levels of red blood cells, haemoglobin and all other clinical measures used to assess the health of the blood. The research also suggested that women with severe gum disease had a higher risk of anaemia, compared to men. Less than three in ten men had anaemia, compared to over four in every ten women.

Dental cost
One in five people are delaying having dental work carried out because of the cost of treatment according to the findings of the Adult Dental Survey. But the results of the survey, which was carried out in 2009 but has just been published in full, suggest even modest charges can prevent people seeking treatment and can widen dental health inequalities. The findings also confirm research by the British Dental Association (BDA) carried out earlier this year in England, which found concerns about the economic climate are leading patients to cancel dental appointments and defer treatments they need. Dr Nigel Carter, chief executive of the BDHF, said: “Dental care should not be viewed as a luxury. Looking after your oral health can reduce the risk of getting infections.”

www.dental-tribune.co.uk