Is something rotten in the state of GDC?

GDC Chair resigns amidst rumours of no confidence vote, divisions within the Council causing concern amongst dental professionals

In a move which has thrown open the deep divisions within the General Dental Council (GDC), Alison Lockyer, Chair of the GDC, has resigned both from the position of Chair and her seat on the Council.

With rumours circulating amongst dental grapevines that there was to be a vote of no confidence, Dr Lockyer issued the following: It is with regret that I have decided to resign from my post as Chair of the General Dental Council, and also from my appointment on the GDC.

It would not be appropriate at the moment for me to go into detail about my reasons for resigning, suffice to say that, over the last few months, there have been issues that have caused me concern.

I remain passionate about the importance of protecting the public through professional self-regulation.

The situation at the GDC has caused concern amongst many of the professional organisations in dentistry, who are calling for an explanation of the situation to restore confidence in the regulator.

A statement by the British Dental Association (BDA) said: "The BDA is seriously concerned at the suddenness of Dr Lockyer’s resignation and the observation she has made in the statement. We are calling for the situation to be clarified as a matter of urgency.

The profession’s confidence in the regulator depends upon the integrity and robustness of the decisions it makes and it is important that the Chair is elected by the Council.

Dental Protection has also voiced its concerns at the situation. Kevin Lewis, Dental Director, said: "Dental Protection has been voicing its concerns for some time now that certain aspects of the GDC’s work left a lot to be desired. The Fitness to Practise procedures were a case in point, as recently confirmed by the largely critical CIGRE report, while some of the recent policy decisions also suggested a fundamental lack of understanding of the dynamics of the profession and its relationship with the public."

"The dignified departure of Alison Lockyer as GDC Chair, and the measured but pointed terms of her public comments as she left office, should set alarm bells ringing that something profoundly disturbing has been happening at the GDC. It is clear that the departing Chair has formally raised concerns with the relevant authorities about the internal operation of the GDC at a senior level, and these concerns surely warrant thorough investigation if public and professional confidence is to be maintained. Divisions are self-evident between some of the lay and professional members, and also between some Council members and the GDC Executive and staff. This is not good news for patients, and coincidentally it is not good news for the profession either at a time of such enormous challenge."

The GDC is remaining tight-lipped about the current situation. A statement issued on behalf of the GDC said: Alison Lockyer has resigned as Chair of the General Dental Council and as a member of the Council.

We would like to thank Alison for her service as Chair since January 2010 and as a member of the Council since 2003 and we wish her well for the future.

The GDC will now consider the process for appointing a new Chair and any interim arrangements needed to ensure the continued smooth running of business.

According to reports, the GDC will meet this week to appoint an interim chair, with a successor to be elected at the Council’s September meeting, when hustings will be held.