GMC looks for new panelists to make decisions on doctors’ fitness to practise

Have you got what it takes to help make decisions about whether a doctor is fit to treat patients? That is the question being asked by the General Medical Council which has embarked on a major recruitment campaign to find medical and non-medical panelists who will sit in judgement at its fitness to practise hearings. It is the first campaign for new panelists in five years.

The panelists have a vital role in protecting patients and making sure proper standards of conduct and behaviour are maintained within the profession. They have to make independent decisions in cases where the doctor faces serious allegations, which could affect their registration as a doctor. The panelists hear evidence, decide whether the allegations are proved, whether the doctors’ fitness to practise is impaired, and if so what action is required.

There are normally three panelists for each hearing and each panel must include at least one woman and one man. They have to be open-minded and analytical in their approach to their work, and they need to be able to think clearly, to focus on the evidence and to make sound judgements.

Doctors and members of the public who are women, or who have black and minority ethnic backgrounds, are particularly encouraged to apply, as the GMC wishes to maintain the diversity within the pool of panelists so that it is as representative as possible, both of the medical profession and society in general.

As most hearings take place in Manchester, the GMC is keen to hear from candidates who live within commutable distance of Manchester, although the GMC also wants to hear from suitably qualified candidates who live throughout the UK. The new panelists are being recruited to replace those whose terms of office are due to expire next year.

The GMC is holding a series of sessions where those considering applying can learn more about the role of panelists and the work of the GMC. Candidates interested in attending one of the sessions should contact panelap- plications@gmc-uk.org for further details.

Although in formal terms these are not public appointments, the recruitment process will be carried out in line with the guidance issued by the Office of the Public Appointments Commissioner and an independent assessor will monitor the process to ensure consistency and that it is accessible and fair for everyone who applies.

The closing date for applications is 19 June 2011. Candidates can obtain further information about the posts and apply online at https://jobs.gmc-uk.org.

King’s Dental Institute wins innovation awards

The King’s College London Dental Institute is delighted to be shortlisted for an impressive triple win at the prestigious Medical Futures Innovation Awards, winning two awards for innovations praised by judges addressing major unmet needs in both dental treatment and dental training, as well as receiving a coveted Special Award that honours one of the Institute’s cutting-edge research teams.

Winning the ‘Best Education and Training’ category was SMART, a new virtual reality, haptic (sense-of-touch) ‘dentical chair’ system aimed to teach the next generation of dentists. The innovation was developed by King’s academics Professor Margaret Cox, Dr Jonathan P San Diego and Dr Barry Quinn, and a team of over 24 clinicians, psychologists, sociologists and computer scientists, including Professor William Harvin, Dr Alastair Barrow and Brian The from the University of Reading.

Using a haptic dental drill and mirror to operate on virtual teeth shown in 3D on a screen, this system allows trainee dentists to reflect what would be seen in real life, and features a foot pedal to control the speed and settings of the dental drill. Although there are competitive systems on the market, the hapTEL team’s unique software platform allows the overall unit to sell for up to £20,000 less than the nearest competitor.

Haptics is already widely used in the multimillion dollar computer gaming industry, and the technical and educational expertise of hapTEL team will lead to other haptic applications such as therapy for stroke victims, medical applications and educational aids for children with dyspraxia and other learning difficulties.

The hapTEL team, led by Professor Margaret Cox, was bestowed with an exceptional accolade at the prestigious event, receiving the Special Award for the Best Educational Innovation.

The top-gical gel is the first platform that it is as representative as possible, both of the medical profession and society in general.

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King’s Dental Institute is delighted to be in receipt of three 2011 Medical Future Innovation Awards. It’s pleasing to see our world-leading research teams being recognised in this way, particularly for the Best Educational Innovation Special Award.

Protecting toddlers from dental decay

The British Dental Health Foundation has given its full backing to the Infant and Toddler Forum to help achieve a major improvement in the dental health of children under the age of five.

Previous research shows that around one third of children under the age of five in the UK continue to suffer from dental decay and the BDHF is now working closely with both the Infant and Toddler Forum to help raise awareness of the issue with health care professionals, parents, carers and guardians.

With diet being an important factor for healthy teeth, the Foundation also aimed to achieve the Forum’s ‘Ten Steps for Healthy Toddlers’, which covers advice in areas such as eating, drinking and exercise. Both organisations have now combined during National Smile Month to produce a new factsheet called ‘Protecting Toddlers from Tooth Decay’, which provides comprehensive advice on how to care for children’s teeth – including fluoride, medicines, diet, snacking, tooth brushing and bottle-feeding.

Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, Dr Nigel Carter, said: “It is really important children develop a good oral health routine from a very early age. It is also important that the people who care for them have the knowledge and information to help nurture children. Our relationship with the Infant and Toddler Forum creates an excellent opportunity for us to share our experience and advice directly with the people and organisations that have the most influence on children in their formative years.”

Judy More, paediatric dietician and member of the Forum explains: “Parents often think that tooth decay in children’s first teeth is not important as they will grow their adult set in any case. However, the first teeth are just as important as adult teeth as early loss of the first teeth can lead to overcrowding when adult teeth appear. The Infant & Toddler Forum has produced some simple guidance and tips for parents to help avoid tooth decay in their little ones!”

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Editorial comment

If there is one thing that fries my circuit boards, it’s seeing something that supposedly is about the whole NHS (or even healthcare in general) but has no mention whatsoever about dentistry!

Case in point – I received an email newsletter from a law firm who specialises in the healthcare industry – promoting their presence at next month’s NHS Confederation Annual Conference and Exhibition. ‘Hmmm this sounds interesting’ I thought, and proceeded to look up the conference programme and details.

Well there was no need to get excited, because dentistry does not seem to be invited to this auspicious event! There were no speakers on dentistry, no mention of it in the commissioning presentations or workshops, and no one making their presence known at the exhibition (one point to note, the General Medical Council have a stand at the exhibition…).

If anyone happens to be going (it’s in Manchester if you’re interested) and is flying the flag for dentistry, let me know how it goes. One other bit of news that had me rolling my eyes was the ‘shock’ revelation by the Financial Times and then the BBC that the CQC are experiencing staff shortages to the tune of nearly 500 people, 133 of those being inspectors.

Now, that may be a ‘duh’ moment, but it does raise concerns about the Commission’s ability to inspect dental practices in the first year of registration for dental practices.

I have been in contact with a CQC spokeswoman to ask this very question, and when I know, you’ll know.

Join the loo queue

King’s College dental students have recently starred in Water Aid’s ‘Join the Loo Queue video’, a light-hearted and warming video of people queuing for the toilet, which was filmed all around the world.

However, besides the humorous ‘how many people can you fit in a port-a-loo’ shot, the video brings home some serious messages, showing how more than 40 per cent of the world’s population are living without a toilet and that one in eight people live without safe water. As a result, 4,000 children die every single day. One message that the video conveys is that the government could help 100 million people out of this crisis.

The video, which accompanies the Loo Queue petition that will be happening during the Glastonbury festival this summer, is a display of solidarity with those who have been waiting their whole lives for a safe, clean place to go to the toilet.

Watch the video at www.wateraid.org/looqueue and sign the petition to call on the government to address this injustice by committing to lifting 100 million people out of water and sanitation poverty by 2015!

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Researchers uncover therapies for dry mouth

According to a recent report, researchers from the University of Louisville are closer to helping millions of people who suffer from dry mouth.

Douglas Darling, Department of Oral Health and Rehabilitation, University of Louisville School of Dentistry, and his team have identified a protein sorting mechanism used by the salivary gland.

Patients who have suffered damage to their salivary glands due to radiation therapy, prescription drugs or Sjögren’s Syndrome (an immune system disorder) are more prone to dry mouth issues. However, Darling and his team have discovered a completely new approach, which suggests the reason no salivary sorting receptor protein has been found is that it may not exist.

According to a report, Darling's new model, says that the salivary cargo protein, Parotid Secretory Protein (PSP), selectively and directly binds to a rare lipid, a type of fat molecule called PtdIns(3,4)P2, which is present only in certain cell membranes; it is also only present on one side of the membrane.

Darling also found PtdIns(3,4)P2 can flip to the inner part of the vesicle membrane - giving PSP the opportunity to bind it.

The next step is to identify ways to test mechanisms that could help patients sort proteins.

The study, Parotid Secretory Protein Binds Phosphatidylinositol (3,4) Bisphosphate appeared in the Journal of Dental Research.

NHS in your pocket

NHS Direct has launched a free mobile app so people can access its trusted and reliable health advice conveniently from wherever they are.

The app, which has made the top spot of the free iPhone apps, was launched this week, means that people with an iPhone or Android smartphone can access advice directly from the NHS on their own or someone else's symptoms; they can do this by answering a number of clinically designed questions.

The app is also linked to NHS Direct's telephone service and, if a further assessment is recommended, users will be able to submit their contact details so that an NHS Direct nurse advisor can call them back. Patients will be able to review and amend their answers at any point and expand information on specific symptoms should they need additional help identifying them.

The app includes a list of 37 symptoms, including dental pain, diarrhoea and vomiting, abdominal pain, rashes, back pain and burns and then explains clearly what the user needs to do. It's design is clear and concise, minus any medical jargon, and uses daily scenarios to aid any advice that is given.

Patients can also get advice about how to relieve symptoms associated with specific conditions such as flu and hay fever. There's also the opportunity to get more specialist advice on issues such as mental health, contraception, sexual health matters and pregnancy problems.

The app is available to download free of charge for Android devices from the Android market place: https://market.android.com/ and for the iPhone (including the iPod Touch® and iPad® applications) through the app store. The health and symptoms checkers that are available through the app are also available online at www.nhs.uk/nhsdirect.

Additionally, NHS Direct's online initial assessment symptom checker is now available on web-enabled mobile phones by typing 'mobile.nhsdirect.nhs.uk' into the phone web-browser.

People who would prefer to speak to someone, have not got internet access or think a further discussion about their symptoms is needed can still call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 any time day or night.

The development of innovative digital services is a strong focus for NHS Direct's five year business plan. Giving patients remote and virtual options to empower them and encourage self-service is identified as crucial to its ambitions to provide a more valuable service to patients and to support the wider NHS.

The new findings could be a great help for those suffering with dry mouth.

Third of children in Birmingham have tooth decay

New figures have recently been released revealing that a third of children under the age of five in Birmingham have either missing teeth or tooth decay.

Although Birmingham Community Healthcare Trust has been encouraging children to take better care of their teeth and gums by using giant toothbrushes, the statistics show that the amount of people visiting their dentist has dramatically decreased.

It was reported that health experts have attributed the high rates of decay and obesity to poor diets that are full of sugar and fatty foods.

Quoted in the news release, Jasmin Frater, a postnatal co-ordinator for the under-fives programme, said that oral health care should start from a very early age and parents need to take responsibility for their children’s oral health.

A third of children under five in Birmingham have tooth decay or missing teeth

Dental dilemma

It has been reported that Liverpool’s A&E dental department, which provides an emergency service performed by student dentists, is attracting thousands of young people as they choose to visit the dentist there instead of registering with a regular NHS dentist.

Last year alone more than 8,000 patients attended the unit, costing the NHS more money than if they had visited ordinary dentists.

The Liverpool Primary Care Trust (PCT) investigated the issue and found that patients were visiting dental hospitals as an alternative to other care. It is believed that patients prefer to visit dental hospitals because the care is free and there isn’t the hassle of having to register.

According to the report, there are still NHS spaces across the city and even though appointments cannot be made to visit the A&E dental department, it is possible to join a queue to access care.

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Changes welcomed

The British Dental Practice Managers’ Association welcomes new president, Jill Taylor, to the helm.

The 54-year-old practice manager from Kilwinning, Ayrshire, Scotland was voted in by members at the BDPMAs AGM at the BDAs Dental Conference and Exhibition in Manchester on Saturday May 21.

Jill, practice manager at Botanics Dental Care in Glasgow, said she is delighted with her prestigious role within the BDPMAs, which provides support, expert advice and information to practice managers and administrators.

“It is an honour to become president of the BDPMAs and I am very much looking forward to my two years in office. There are some exciting changes taking place within the organisation, which will be revealed in more detail at the BDTA Showcase in October!”

Jill started her career as a dental nurse in 1994 and joined the BDPMAs in late 2008, where she became a regional co-ordinator within a year. Hannah Hume, a practice manager in London, has become vice president.

The BDPMAs was formed in 1995 and now has more than 800 members. Furthermore, members have agreed to a change of name for the Association and as has been posted on both Twitter and Facebook, BDPMAs is going to be renamed The Association of Dental Administrators and Managers, or ADAM for short.

A spokesperson for the BDPMAs said that the change of name will take effect in October with an official launch to the profession at Dental Showcase in October where there will be a press briefing to tell everyone all about it.

Tobacco Amnesty

An event planned to take place on World No Tobacco Day. By binning their old cigarettes in exchange for one of E-Lites revolui
tionary new disposable electronic cigarettes, the event gave commuters at Liverpool Street Station in London an opportunity to try smoking without tobacco or tar. The report stated that E-Lites replicate a smoking experience, by not only being a realistic-looking device, but by turning a pure nicotine solution into a vapour that is healthier, cheaper and unrestricted for use in public places. The interest in our Tobacco Amnesty proves beyond doubt that smokers who are struggling to stop, or simply don’t want to quit, are open to new ideas, and just as VHS videotapes have been overtaken by DVDs and digital downloads, we believe E-Lites will render cigarettes out-dated before too long.

I am Tubulite Barbie

Dentists across the country were called to use their creativity in a competition designed to show off the power of social media.

Dhru Shah, dentist and founder of website dentinal tubules and Mark Ohorn, consultant in online and social media marketing, came up with an idea to run a competition for dental professionals to take pictures of the website’s #tubulite badge in weird and wonderful places.

The prize was a free place on Mark’s next Social Media Kick-start course, worth £250.

Mark commented: “I set up the competition #tubulite badge to find the best, most fun, most exotic, most daring and most creative photo people could take of their badge.”

We had many entries including Darsh Vadera wearing a badge and photos of the badge on the moon (thank goodness for Photoshop huh?), but the final winner was chosen for sheer entertainment and creativity.

And the winner was Rachel Webb, a trainee dental ceramist. Her photo (left/right/delete as appropriate) saw toy icon Barbie getting involved in the tubulite trend.

For more information go to www.dentinaltubules.com

Islanders lose their dentist

Nearly half of population admit skipping bedtime brush

Nearly half of the population (47 per cent) has admitted to regularly skipping brushing their teeth at bedtime, putting their oral health at risk.

Women are the most likely to break one of the three golden rules for clean and healthy teeth, with nearly six out of ten (59 per cent) regularly skipping brushing their teeth at bedtime, compared to just over a third of men (35 per cent). In contrast, relatively few people skip brushing their teeth in the morning with just one in ten people starting the day without looking after their teeth.

The findings have been revealed by the British Dental Health Foundation as part of its National Smile Month campaign, which has been running since 1972. The survey – which looked at the nation’s brushing habits – also found that over a quarter of the population (28 per cent) have admitted to not brushing their teeth for 24 hours and around one in seven people (15 per cent) have not cleaned their teeth for more than two days.

During National Smile Month, the Foundation seeks to remind everyone of the three golden rules for good oral health: brushing for two minutes twice a day using a fluoride toothpaste; cutting down on how often you eat and drink sugary foods and drinks; and visiting your dentist regularly, as often as they recommend.

Chief Executive of the British Dental Health Foundation, Dr Nigel Carter, said: “Anyone who regularly skips brushing their teeth – morning or night-time – is storing up oral health problems for the future such as tooth decay and gum disease – the biggest cause of tooth loss often resulting in the need for bridg
es, dentures or implants. Gum disease has also been linked to other medical problems such as heart disease, strokes, diabetes and respiratory disease.

“Good oral health cannot be maintained by brushing once a day as each brushing session has a specific purpose. Brushing first thing in the morning coats the tooth’s enamel with fluoride to strengthen and protect the tooth surface against acid attacks throughout the day.

“Brushing last thing at night removes the deposits which have built up from eating and drinking during the day, as well as removing plaque – the cause of gum disease. The last brush of the day also coats the teeth with fluoride, which is not washed away through eating and drinking, and continues to protect the tooth’s surface further during sleep,” advised Dr Carter.

5,000 islanders who are about to lose their dentist have been revealed by NHS Shetland who are pledging a solution for the crisis by September when Alan Owen ceases practising.

The organisation’s chief executive Ralph Roberts said that the issue was being discussed “day in, day out”. He hoped that some answers would be known by the end of this month or early in July with a replacement service in place “by September or shortly afterwards”.

People across the islands have begun receiving letters informing them they are being deregistered by the practice in Lerwick, which Mr Owen is required to do before retiring on 2nd September.

The business, which is contracted to the NHS and run from a dental surgery in St Olaf Street leased from NHS Shetland, has not been brought by a new buyer. For the moment, patients seeking emergency treatment are advised to contact the Monkfield clinic or NHS 24.

One of the competition ideas

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June 13-19, 2011

United Kingdom Edition

DENTAL TRIBUNE
In order to address the need for dental instruments in developing countries, the BDTA is pleased to announce that the instrument amnesty will be returning to Showcase 2011. The BDTA is linking up with Dentaid, the dental charity striving to improve the oral health of disadvantaged communities around the world, to encourage the dental team to donate their unwanted hand instruments at this year's exhibition.

There is a severe shortage of dentists in developing countries and the ones that are working are drastically under-resourced. The level of care they are qualified to offer is significantly higher than their equipment allows; no light, no drill, no suction, difficult working conditions and very importantly, only a limited range of instruments.

Recipient dentists are always delighted with the equipment provided but some have been known to literally weep with joy when they have opened the box of instruments provided with the surgery, highlighting just how important these hand tools really are for day-to-day dental care.

Andy Jong, Dentaid’s CEO said: “Since developing the portable dental chair and portable instrument kit, Dentaid has experienced a big surge in orders from charitable projects and hospitals with community oral health programmes. This year’s instrument amnesty is a great way for the dental team to help us meet the demand and reach many more remote places with improved oral health care.”

It is likely that there is a huge selection of instruments sitting in the bottom of cupboards in dental practices across the country not being used. The highly successful instrument amnesty last took place at Showcase in 2005 where over 10,000 instruments were collected. It returns to this year’s event as a way to once again replenish the diminishing stocks and enable Dentaid to continue its important work.

Bring your instruments with you to BDTA Dental Showcase 2011 and please ensure your instruments have been properly sterilised and then donate, along with details of your practice, to the Dentaid stand during the exhibition.

BDTA Dental Showcase 2011 takes place between 20-22 October 2011 at the NEC, Birmingham. To secure your free of charge entry to the show, reserve your ticket at www.dentalshowcase.com. For further information on Dentaid, visit www.dentaid.org.

**News**

‘Instrument Amnesty’ returns to Showcase

**B2A announce 2011 Golf Tournament**

The Bridge2Aid (B2A) 2011 Golf Tournament is on! The team are delighted to announce their hugely popular and now annual Golf Tournament will be held at Hankley Common Golf Course, in Farnham Surrey on August 30th, 2011.

Voted the 50th best golf course to play in the UK BY Golf World Magazine and soon to host the Open Championship qualifying competition in June, Hankley Common provides the perfect setting for Bridge2Aid’s Tournament this summer.

Starting the day with a light breakfast, followed by 18 holes and topped off with a delicious three course lunch, prize giving and a special auction with a round of Golf at the prestigious Loch Lomond up for grabs - this year’s Tournament is set to be the best yet!

If you’re a budding golfer, keen to host a day out for your team or simply looking to support the dental charity, there are now 25 teams available to book in one of Surrey’s finest golf courses.

A team of four can be booked now for just £488. For more information on the day or to book your team contact Stuart Thompson now on 01483 304944. Alternatively for more information on the course go to www.hankleycommon.co.uk.

**Derbyshire dentists complete CQC registration**

Derbyshire dentists can celebrate National Smile Month in style, as all 126 NHS practices in the area have now successfully signed up with the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Keith Mann, head of Primary Care Contracts for NHS Derbyshire County, was quoted saying that: “It was a very positive sign that dentists across the county are committed to improving NHS dental services and offering patients the best possible standards of care.”

According to the report, the trust is continuing to operate the dental helpline, which provides information and advice about dental services and oral health matters in the area.

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A new report has revealed that 60 per cent of European doctors are using Wikipedia for their work. 500 GPs across Europe were interviewed for the report, which examined how regularly doctors accessed the internet for both professional and personal reasons. According to one report, the statistic jumps to 69% when analysing the number of European GPs using social media sites for professional use outside of just Wikipedia (including Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, Twitter).

On the site, the online encyclopaedia, confirms that: “...Wikipedia is written collaboratively by largely anonymous internet volunteers who write without pay. Anyone with internet access can write and make changes to Wikipedia articles... users can contribute anonymously, under a pseudonym, or with their real identity, if they choose.”

“The issue that needs debate here is whether this is a surprise to patients and doctors alike, as it is clearly a forum that GPs do refer to,” said Damian Eade, Director at Insight Research Group, who spearheaded the research. “The report is certainly not saying Wikipedia, and other social platforms, are not exceptional fonts of knowledge for the public. But should it be a sensible and reliable place for medical professionals to turn to?”

Surprisingly the report also highlighted that throughout Europe the social web wasn’t only used by young doctors: the report revealed that around 75 per cent of doctors in the 51-60 age groups had stated that they regularly used Wikipedia for professional use.

The report also suggests that the internet is fast becoming a regular part of a patient’s visiting to their doctor. Half of the doctors interviewed stated that they recommend specific websites for patients to visit following their consultations; a further 87 per cent were known to have advised certain sites for patients with regards to seeking background and educational information on their condition; 70 per cent searched the internet for additional support and advice and 69 per cent used the web for more information regarding treatment and medication.

One report suggested that the report has reinforced the view that we have entered the era of the ‘ePatient’ - where the web has become a trusted tool for not only daily tasks, but also health-related matters. However, as Damian Eade stressed: “Whether it’s researching illnesses, sharing experiences, making recommendations or providing moral support for other patients around the world, the social web has re-invented health advice, and we need to make sure the right advice is on hand for people.”

### WYTEN Technology gets new management team

This week heralds a new senior management team at Wytten Technology as the company begins selling products direct to dental care professionals in the UK as well as expanding its business into USA.

Benjamin Mak is promoted to chief executive officer. His responsibilities will include overseeing the continuing growth in the UK market and expansion plans in the new global markets. Previously chief operations officer at Wytten Technology, Benjamin has been with the company since its inception. Previously holding senior managerial positions in industries as diverse as engineering, logistics and wholesale supply, Benjamin brings a wealth of experience and skills to the company. Benjamin has been thoroughly instrumental in the establishment of Wytten Technology as a leading, innovative supplier of dental products.

Lisa Roche assumes the role of international sales and marketing manager at Wytten Technology where she will be responsible for developing a direct sales structure for the product range. Lisa holds more than 30 years’ experience in the dental industry working with market leaders including Discus Dental and Nobel Biocare.

Melonie Prebble becomes international clinical development manager at Wytten Technology where her role will encompass clinical advisory and practical training, key customer support and team development. Boasting 20 years’ experience in the dental industry, Melonie is a renowned national speaker in the field of comprehensive care, dental hygiene and team building and a regular contributor to eminent dental journals. She previously chaired the British Dental Hygiene Association London region.