As Alison Lockyer, (pictured), marks her first year as Chair of the General Dental Council in January 2011, she’s urging more registrants to get involved in the regulator’s work.

“New Year is traditionally a time to make resolutions but the GDC is already ahead of the game with its corporate strategy now firmly in place. Instead it’s time for us to really get down to business with delivering the results we’ve promised registrants.”

One of the biggest commitments in the strategy is to review GDC Standards for Dental Professionals. Alison said: “Our strategy pledged to ensure policy is developed on the basis of consultation and evidence. The Standards review is an example of this. Work is picking up pace in 2011 with a series of events helping us listen to the people who will be most affected by the changes we make – dental professionals. We know from the calls and emails we get that there are plenty of people with views on the standards we expect registrants to meet. Now is the chance to help shape this work. We’re holding free registrant events across the UK from January onwards with workshops about this important issue.”

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All eyes are on the government this week as the long-awaited updated Health Bill is published. David Cameron has already begun his defence of the Bill before its publication in a speech delivered at Parliament. Medical associations have been expressing their concerns, calling the reforms ‘an upheaval’ or ‘unnecessary’.

Does any of this sound familiar? I can hear the low mutterings of dentists saying ‘welcome to our world’. Of course, the Health Bill will have an effect on dentistry, and Dental Tribune will have comment and analysis on those parts of the Bill which will shake our world even more.

In other news, a shameless plug for Smile-on’s upcoming Clinical Innovations Conference, to be held May 6-7 in London. With an excellent line up of speakers, including Julian Webber, Nasser Barchi, James Russell and Eddie Scher, this really is the place to be for the latest developments in restorative and aesthetic dentistry (and you may even get to speak to me!). Go to page four for more details.

BADN salary survey

The British Association of Dental Nurses has launched its on-line 2010/11 Dental Nurse Salary Survey. The survey will cover the tax year which ended April 2010, and is open to all dental nurses in the UK. The salary information gathered by the survey will be used to lobby the GDC, MPs and other relevant authorities for a more realistic ARF for dental nurses.

The survey, which will close on 51 March 2011, will be conducted through the CVENT facility and several thousand dental nurses will be sent an e-mail invitation to participate. Others can access the survey via a link on the BADN website www.badn.org.uk. Participants will also be able to forward a personalised message to dental nurse colleagues inviting them to participate.

ARF survey results

• 97 per cent considered the increased fee of £120 to be too high for dental nurses
• 97 per cent felt that there should be a separate, lower, ARF for dental nurses
• 89 per cent felt that there should be a lower ARF for part-time workers
• 78 per cent paid their own ARF with no financial assistance from their employers. Employers of 16 per cent paid respondents’ ARF in full and five per cent in part
• Of that five per cent, just over half paid between £50 and £100 towards the ARF, a quarter paid between £100 and £150
• 94 per cent stated that they would re-register in July 2011 – although most pointed out that they had no choice if they wished to continue working as a dental nurse!
• Of those respondents who stated that they would not be re-registering in July 2011, 68 per cent stated that it was because they could not afford the ARF/were leaving the profession
• 85 per cent expressed their willingness to lobby MPs regarding the ARF
• 20 per cent considered that an ARF of between £50 and £100 would be appropriate for dental nurses; with 19 per cent each considering ARFs of £100-150 and £150-200 appropriate for dental nurses, 11 per cent considered an ARF of £200-250 appropriate for dental nurses, and 14 per cent considered £400 to be the acceptable limit for dental nurses.

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DT BADN salary survey

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Is asthma linked to caries?

A recent thesis presented at the Sahlgrenska Academy has concluded that children and adolescents with asthma have more caries and suffer more often from gingivitis (gingival inflammation) than people of similar age without asthma.

The work presented in the thesis examined children, adolescents and young adults in the age groups three, six, 12-16 and 18-24, with and without asthma. The first study revealed that three-year-olds who suffer from asthma have more caries than three-year-olds without asthma.

The scientists have also compared the oral health of adolescents aged 12-16 years who had long-term moderate or severe asthma with that of adolescents of the same age without asthma. Martin Stensson, dental hygienist and researcher at the Department of Cariology, Institute of Odontology at the Sahlgrenska Academy said: “Only 1 out of 20 in the asthma group was caries free, while 15 out of 20 were caries free in the control group.”

“One factor that may have influenced the development of caries is lowered level of saliva secretion, which was probably caused by the medication taken by those with asthma. Adolescents with asthma also suffered more often from gingivitis than those without asthma.”

The work presented in the thesis also examined the oral health of young adults aged 18-24 years, with and without asthma. The results from this age group were nearly identical to those in the group of 12-16-year-olds, although the differences between those with asthma and those without were not as large. Stensson points out that the numbers of participants in the studies were relatively small, and it may be difficult to generalise the results. What is interesting, however, is that young people with asthma have more caries than those without asthma.

Such research emphasises how important it is that young people with asthma receive extra dental care early, and that a preventive dental care system is established between the health care system and the dental care systems.

Cloudy with a chance of fluoride

What if your toothpaste could tell you whether you needed to leave the house carrying an umbrella? Or how hot the day was going to be?

Odd as this may sound, a new product that does just this is currently being created by David Carr of MIT’s Media Lab. The prototype product, “Tastes Like Rain” is a one of a kind invention that uses a computer and weather information from the internet to dispense different flavours of toothpaste depending on the weather.

One blog on the new toothpaste dispenser said: “The prototype is currently hooked up to a small Linux computer that pulls forecasts, using custom software to compare previous and current temperatures and divvy up the flavours. “In this case, toothpaste is modified to dispense one of three flavours depending on the weather. If it’s mint, you know it’s colder out than yesterday, Cinnamon means it’s hotter. Blue stripes indicate precipitation.”

BDA calls for a rethink

Proposals to introduce revalidation for dentists would be likely to increase paperwork, reduce the number of patients seen and add another layer of regulation. That’s the verdict the British Dental Association (BDA) expressed in its response to the General Dental Council’s (GDC) consultation on revalidation for dentists. The BDA believes the proposals are onerous, bureaucratic and inappropriate, and out of step with the GDC’s repeatedly expressed intention to develop a system which is proportionate.

Furthermore, it says that the evidence base for the proposals is unconvincing and that pilots for the proposals carried out in 2009 failed to cover a representative number of practitioners. It also calls for the proposals to be subjected to a full cost-benefit analysis.

Dr Susie Sanderson, Chair of the BDA’s Executive Board, said: “It is important that standards for professional revalidation in dentistry are transparent, consistent, and proportionate, and offer reassurance to patients. The BDA supports measures that meet those criteria. We also agree with the view expressed by the Working Group on Non-Medical Revalidation that the intensity and frequency of revalidation must be proportionate to the risks inherent in the work a practitioner is involved in.

“The BDA supports the work of the GDC as the regulator of dentistry in the UK, but we have some serious concerns about the proposals put forward in this consultation and the wider context in which they have been presented. The circumstances confronting dentistry have changed since these proposals were initially mooted and it would be sensible to look at them again to assess the cost of changes and the benefits they might deliver. We would welcome the opportunity to input into that process.”

The BDA’s full response to the consultation can be accessed at: www.bda.org/dentists/education/revalidation.aspx.
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* vs a standard manual brush.
Reference: 1. Data on file, P&G.
Cancer strategy could save 5,000 lives a year

Detailed plans to transform cancer care in England and save thousands of extra lives each year have been announced by Health Secretary Andrew Lansley.

Overall, these plans will drive up England’s cancer survival rates so that by 2014/15 an extra 5,000 lives will be saved every year.

‘Improving Outcomes – A Strategy for Cancer’, sets out how the Government, NHS and public can prevent cancer, improve the quality and efficiency of cancer services and move towards achieving outcomes which rival the best in Europe.

The strategy – backed with more than £750 million over four years – sets out a range of actions to improve cancer outcomes, including:

• diagnosing cancer earlier
• helping people to live healthier lives to reduce preventable cancers
• screening more people
• introducing new screening programmes

In addition, the Government will provide extra investment to increase access to radiotherapy and ensure all patients are able to get this critical treatment.

‘Improving Outcomes – A Strategy for Cancer’, is the first of a number of outcomes strategies to be published following on from the White Paper, Equity and excellence: Liberating the NHS.

Outcomes strategies will play a crucial role in translating the underpinning principles of the Coalition Government’s reforms of the health and care services into the steps it needs to take to drive improvements health outcomes; putting patients and the public first, empowering professionals and strengthening local accountability.


Now you can with ViziLite Plus™

The economical, disposable screening test

Get ‘Up To Date’ with P&G

Oral-B has released the dates for their 2011 ‘Up To Date’ scientific exchange seminars with guest speakers Prof Trevor Burke, Prof Iain Chapple & Prof Nicola West. The lectures are aimed at dentists, dental hygienists and therapists.

Clinical dental professionals are invited to attend a complimentary CPD accredited evening event at one of ten locations:

• Torgny (Imperial Hotel, 16 Feb), Sheffield (Kemwen Hall, 8 Mar), Birmingham (National Motorcycle Museum, 10 Mar), Reading (Hilton Hotel, 51 Mar), Cardiff (St. David’s Hotel, 7 Apr), Warrington, (The Park Royal, 14 Apr), Newcastle (The Life Centre, 5 May), London (Royal College of Physicians, 12 May), Glasgow (Hilton Strathclyde, 25 Jun), Milton Keynes (Hurwood House, 50 Jun).

Prof Iain Chapple will be speaking at all venues; Prof Trevor Burke will join Iain at Birmingham, Reading, Warrington and Newcastle. Prof Nicola West will lecture at the remaining venues. The evening will be hosted by Dr Stephen Hancock.

Every delegate is invited to enjoy a complimentary meal at the beginning of the evening and a free gift which retails at £150. Contact Julia Fish on 07585-500550 or e-mail julia@abcommunications.com.
Staff support for B2A

Practice Plan, the leading provider of practice branded dental membership plans and Bridge2Aid, a charity providing primary dental care and education to communities in Tanzania, have always had a very close relationship. From sponsored walks and bike rides, to event sponsorship, design support, Christmas cards or physically travelling over to Tanzania to carry out restorative work, Practice Plan has endeavoured to support the worthwhile charity year-upon-year.

However, the company has now decided to go one step further and actually delve into the heart of the charity and financially support the people on the ground in Tanzania, and so, Practice Plan now covers the salary for one of the charity’s employees, a Community Support Worker called Kibibi Kengia. Chief Executive of Bridge2Aid, Mark Topley explained: “Practice Plan’s sponsorship of Kibibi on our Community Development team has been a huge benefit to our programme at Bukumbi. It allows us to commit confidently to regular work with a vulnerable and marginalised group of people, and bring hope, dignity and encouragement on a weekly basis. We’re very grateful to Practice Plan for their continuing support which is helping to change lives in Tanzania.”

To find out more about the fundraising Practice Plan does, or to see how they can support you, please call 01691 684135 or visit www.practiceplan.co.uk for more details.

An innovative device which cancels out the noise of the dental drill could spell the end of people’s anxiety about trips to the dentist. Experts at King’s College London, Brunel University and London South Bank University, who pioneered the invention, have developed the device to help phobic’s attend the dentist more easily.

It is believed that many people’s fear of the dentist is rooted in the ubiquitous noise of the dreaded drill and is the prime cause of anxiety about dental treatment; however with this new device, the patient will be able to listen to their favourite tunes on an MP3 player. The headphones used with the device use noise canceling technology, with inbuilt resistors that dull low frequency wavelengths.

The device works by using an ‘adaptive filtering’ technology, where the headphones block out certain wavelengths, allowing the dentist’s voice to seep through unchanged. Containing a microphone and a chip that analyses the incoming sound wave, the device produces an inverted wave to cancel out unwanted noise.

Although the product is not yet available to dental practitioners, King’s is calling for an investor to help bring it to market.