The inquiry by the Professional Standards Authority for Health and Social Care was conducted in response to concerns raised by the former GDC Chair, Alison Lockyer who stepped down in May 2011. In June 2011, the Department of Health asked CHRE to investigate the concerns raised by Alison Lockyer in her letter of resignation.

Alison Lockyer made a number of serious allegations about the quality of the GDC’s governance arrangements and on the Council’s ability to progress matters which are important to public protection.

Among the allegations, Alison Lockyer said that those who stood up against the executive’s decisions were threatened with complaints being made against them, thereby preventing Executive Chairmen Sylvia Gavirny from being held to account. She also stated that the quality and quantity of information shared with her as Chair was inadequate to enable the executive to be held to account, and that the impact of this was slow progress by the GDC to improve its performance in known areas of weaknesses.

Following a investigation which began in September 2011, the report rejects the allegations made against the GDC and its staff. It found that, while there were weaknesses in the GDC’s governance and fitness to practise processes during 2009 to early 2011, the GDC did not fail patients then, and is on the right track now.

Chair Kevin O’Farren said: “We welcome the findings of the PSAs report and the opportunity to draw a line under this matter. We will review all aspects of the report to ensure we are acting on any lessons to be learnt and we are very pleased that the PSA gives a clear endorsement of reforms we have already introduced.”

Kevin Lewis, Dental Director of Dental Protection, added: “Clearly, the GDC is in a better place now than it was during the turbulent period which may have contributed in part to the events that are chronicled by this report. In particular, the early stages of the FJP procedures have been overhauled and this process of improvement is continuing. We welcome that, and also the spirit in which the GDC has acknowledged that all was not well when we first voiced our own concerns.

Peter Ward, the Chief Executive of the BDA, commented: “This report identifies deeply concerning failings around the departure of Dr Lockyer from her role at the GDC. The mishandling of proceedings that is spelt out in this report is astonishing. For a professional regulator to have made such errors in the handling of proceedings is deeply troubling.

“Dentistry needs a strong regulator in which practitioners and patients alike can have confidence. The GDC will have a great deal of work to do to assuage the doubts about it that will have been engendered by its handling of Dr Lockyer and convince the profession that it really has achieved the improvements in its regulatory performance that the PSA identifies.”

Alison Lockyer said: “I am pleased that a light has been shown on some of the problems to which I was seeking to draw attention and if, as a result of this, the task of my successors is easier, I can take considerable comfort from that.

“It is nevertheless disappointing that the opportunity for a full investigation has been missed and the report from the Professional Standards Authority confines itself to the issues specified by the Department of Health.

“I am proud to have given over 11 years of service to my professional regulatory body and am very grateful for all the support, both personal and professional.”
Mobile phones detect mercury contamination

Chemists at the University of Burgos (Spain) have manufactured a sheet that changes colour in the presence of water contaminated with mercury.

The method consists of placing the fine sheet created by the researchers in the water for five minutes. If it turns red, this signals the presence of mercury. “Changes can be seen by the naked eye and anyone, even if they have no previous knowledge, can find out whether a water source is contaminated with mercury above determined limits,” outlines the lecturer García.

The membrane contains a fluorescent organic compound called rhodamine, which acts as a mercury sensor. “Rhodamine is insoluble in water,” says the researcher. “But we chemically fix it to a hydrophilic polymer structure in such a way that when put into water it swells and the sensor molecules are forced to remain in the aqueous medium and interact with mercury.”

The technique could be used for detecting mercury in certain spills and for studying its presence in fish.

Scotland bans cigarette displays

The ban on cigarette displays and vending machines in Scotland will be brought in by the end of April. Implementation of the measure, which was part of the 2010 Tobacco and Primary Medical Services (Scotland) Act, was held up by legal challenges by the tobacco industry.

The ban on open displays of tobacco products in large shops and sales from self-service tobacco vending machines will be introduced on April 29, and will come into force for smaller retailers on April 6, 2015.

Announcing the dates, Scottish public health Minister Michael Matheson said: “Evidence shows that these bans will help prevent young people from taking up smoking.

“That is why we believe this is the right approach for Scotland and I am delighted we are now in a position to implement these bans, which is a key step in maintaining Scotland’s position as a world leader in tobacco control.”

A similar ban on display of tobacco at point of sale in larger shops is already in force elsewhere in the UK.

Heavy penalties for breaching tooth whitening regulations

Dentists are now legally able to provide higher strength tooth-whitening to patients. However, the new regime brings with it heavy penalties for those who breach the conditions which accompany the regulations, warns Andrea James, Head of Healthcare Regulatory with George Davies Solicitors.

She points out that if you breach the law, the maximum penalty is six months imprisonment and/or a fine of up to £5,000. Trading Standards Officers can legally enter and inspect a dental practice at any time to see if a breach has occurred.

Andrea’s comments follow last year’s changes in UK law relating to tooth whitening which were, in turn, a response to an EU directive on consumer safety. Dentists are now legally able to provide tooth whitening with hydrogen peroxide and other compounds or mixtures that release hydrogen peroxide up to six per cent strength instead of the previous 0.1 per cent maximum.

This is subject to compliance with certain conditions. Those conditions are that the products:

• May be provided to consumers to complete the cycle of use.
• Must not be used on any person under the age of 18.

In the circumstances, she continued, it is wise to avoid treating patients under the age of 18. However, the BDA and Dental Protection Ltd are working to obtain clarification of the position on treating Under 18s when this would be in the patient’s best interests. Additional clarification is being sought for those occasional situations when the use of a higher concentration of hydrogen peroxide, during an in-surgery treatment, would be in the patient’s best interests.

GDC seek Chair and Council Members

The regulation of healthcare professionals in the UK is undergoing major change and Government expectations about regulation are likely to result in significant changes in the way the GDC operates.

Council members will play key roles in the strategic development of the organisation and strategic performance management.

Expressions of interest can be made to gdc@councilpointments@gatenbyandsander.com

Alternatively people can sign up to the GDC’s monthly newsletter to find out more once the recruitment period opens.

UK medical schools receive £300,000

All 32 medical schools across the UK have been awarded small grants for innovative activities that aim to foster a research culture in all clinicians entering the NHS.

The awards are made by the Academy of Medical Sciences as part of a £1m, five year scheme called INSPIRE, which is supported by the Wellcome Trust and aims to stimulate medical and dental undergraduates to pursue scientific research. The awards are the first of two rounds, with an additional special project fund of £100,000 available to enable any high impact activities to be rolled out across the UK.

On the awarding of the grants, Professor Sir John Tooke PMedSci, President of the Academy of Medical Sciences said: “Inspiring students to pursue research is crucial for the future of medicine in the UK. By nurturing talent from an early stage, we can ensure that future patients in its benefit from the latest breakthroughs in medical science.”

INSPIRE, a project run by the University of Edinburgh, will harness two currently unconnected in-house electronic portals to establish a dynamic online, searchable database of project opportunities, which could later be rolled out nationally.

The Academy will also run a series of sharing conferences to enable medical schools to showcase activities and share learning.

The second round of INSPIRE small grants will be awarded in 2014.
Editorial comment

Here we are ready for the first big dental event of the year – the Dentistry Show! It’s looking a good one this year, with around 10 conference streams to choose from covering every aspect of dentistry. If you are a young dentist looking for guidance on establishing your career, I’ll see you in the Aspire Academy on the Friday! Hygienist and therapist? You’ll want the H&T Symposium chaired by DT editorial board member Shaun Howe. Looking for ways to boost your profitability? Head for the Dental Business stream chaired by Ashley Latter!

IiP Gold

Thackeray Dental Care, based in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, are pleased to announce they have been awarded the prestigious Investors in People Gold accreditation. This follows their success 3 years ago at being awarded the Bronze level at their first attempt.

This is a rare achievement in any sector, and especially so in dentistry, there only being a handful of practices in the UK to have reached this level. Only three per cent of organisations who achieve Investors in People are able to reach the Gold Standard. To reach this level, the practice was assessed against 196 different aspects of externally set criteria, and had to achieve at least 126 additional requirements over and above the 39 required for the standard IiP award.

Simon Thackeray, practice owner says: “Being awarded Investors in People Gold is an enormous achievement, especially as it is not an industry specific award, and shows that a dental practice can be externally measured for its business abilities and team success rather than just use its own industry as a benchmark. Knowing that only an elite group of UK businesses have reached this level of recognition and that we are part of that small group is quite exciting. In an era of tickbox dominated assessments by organisations such as PCT’s and the CQC who don’t understand dentistry, a rigorous and tested accreditation that actually means something in the wider community, that isn’t just a series of tickboxes, but recognises the culture and environment of a practice is far more valuable to me as a practice owner and leader. It shows us that we are doing the right thing.”

Advanced Defence Sensitive blocks 92% of dentine tubules in just 6 rinses in vitro

Introducing the first in a new expert range from Listerene® – a twice-daily mouthwash built on potassium oxalate crystal technology that blocks dentine tubules deeply for lasting protection from sensitivity.2,3

In just six rinses Advanced Defence Sensitive blocks 92% of dentine tubules; twice as many as the leading recommended pastes.1,4

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* Based on % hydraulic conductance reduction

Recommend Advanced Defence Sensitive for expert care when you’re not there

References:

Do you have an opinion or something to say on any Dental Tribune UK article? Or would you like to write your own opinion for our guest comment page? If so don’t hesitate to write to: The Editor, Dental Tribune UK Ltd, 4th Floor, Treasure House, 19-21 Hatton Garden, London, EC1 8BA
Or email: lisa@healthcare-learning.com
Calls for HPV vaccine for boys

Throat cancer can be caused by HPV (Human Papillomavirus). With rates of throat cancer on the rise, the Foundation are advocating for boys to be vaccinated against HPV, a vaccine which is currently given to girls in the UK in an attempt to cut cervical cancer rates.

The Throat Cancer Foundation says such a vaccine could cost as little as £45 per person, and save hundreds of lives.

Professor Christopher Nutting, lead clinician of the Head and Neck unit at The Royal Marsden Hospital in London, said: “We are seeing a rising number of cases of throat cancer in our clinics in the UK. We need to do all we can to raise awareness of this issue, so the launch of the Throat Cancer Foundation is timely.

“At the moment girls are routinely vaccinated against HPV but boys are not, meaning they are routinely being exposed to a virus that can cause life threatening cancers.

“Evidence from Australia proves that HPV vaccination is effective; where a national programme led to a 90 per cent drop in cases of genital warts in men and women.”

Are tooth development and weaning closely related?

For more than two decades, scientists have relied on studies linking tooth development in juvenile primates with their weaning as a rough proxy for understanding similar landmarks in the evolution of early humans. New research from Harvard, however, challenges thinking that tooth development and weaning aren’t as closely related as previously thought.

A team of researchers led by three members of Harvard’s Department of Human Evolutionary Biology — professors Tanya Smith and Richard Wrangham and postdoctoral fellow Zarin Machanda — used high-resolution digital photographs of chimps in the wild to show that after the eruption of their first molar, many juvenile chimps continued to nurse as much as, if not more than, they had in the past.

Understanding how those early human species developed, Machanda said, can help shed light on one of the most unusual aspects of humanity — childhood.

“One of the most important changes that occurred over human evolution is our extended period of juvenile development,” she said. “Compared to other primates, the apes have a very long childhood, and compared to other apes we have a very long childhood. By examining how chimps develop through their childhood, the hope is we can understand how and when that extended childhood began, and that will give us a greater understanding of the evolution of the human species.”

The researchers, studying the Kanyawara chimpanzee community in Kibale National Park in Uganda, teamed with wildlife photographers who snapped photos of the teeth of juvenile chimps whenever they opened their mouths.

What the images revealed, Smith and Machanda said, came as a surprise.

Where earlier studies suggested that juvenile primates were weaned shortly after the first molar eruption, this study showed that, in addition to eating more solid food, chimps continued to “suckle as much, if not more, than they had before,” Smith said.

“They were showing adult-like feeding patterns while continuing to suckle, which was unexpected.”

IDH launch regional dentist role

Integrated Dental Holdings (IDH) has announced the creation of a new type of dentistry role aimed at graduate dentists, offering free continued professional development training (CPD) and realistic UDA targets to ease them into the workplace post study.

The Regional Dentist at IDH will put graduates into practices, with different clinicians during a year-long contract before they have the opportunity to move into self-employed Associate positions within the business.

Matt Reeves, Head of Resourcing at IDH says, “We’re aware of how tough the first year of work can be for a new dentist and this gives them an opportunity to secure a role that is tailored to their level of experience and desire for variety. We ran this scheme on a smaller scale last year with 10 graduates and were encouraged by their feedback, therefore have created a further 50 roles for this year’s graduates.”

The successful applicants will be given a driving allowance to cover their travel costs as well as mentoring from clinicians and resourcing experts at IDH to help them with the practicalities of the role.

Neil Haldar, a current IDH Regional Dentist in the Midlands commented, “The security, variety and financial rewards far outweigh being an associate. It’s a perfect move if you’re finishing your vocational training or if you’re currently an Associate. I’ve learnt a lot more than my friends (in Associate roles elsewhere) by working with a variety of dentists and specialists across my region.”

The IDH Regional Dentist offer for 2013 is a competitive total earnings package which includes basic salary, car allowance, lab fees paid, free online CPD and access to off-site networking/development days.

Anyone interested in applying for the Regional Dentist Programme can contact the IDH resourcing team on 0845 647 7564. Anyone interested in applying for the Regional Dentist Programme can contact the IDH resourcing team on 0845 647 7564.
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Friday 1st March at the Dentistry Show

Free to attend
www.thedentistryshow.co.uk/leaders

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- A host of online content and special offers from Smile-on
- Networking drinks after the Show
- Discounted party ticket for the Heart Your Smile Ball

Hosted by Raj Rattan with presentations from Nilesh Parmar & Prem-Pal Sehmi, Kevin Lewis, Elaine Halley and Daz Singh
Drinkers underestimate alcohol intake

Some people could be underestimating their alcohol intake by as much as 40 per cent, according to new figures the Department of Health have published.

The recent Health Survey for England highlighted underestimations in both the amount and frequency that people drink, raising major concerns about the nation’s knowledge of alcohol.

Research shows across the country 80 per cent of those that drink too much acknowledge the health risks but think of themselves as most moderate drinkers. More than 60 per cent of these drinkers have no intention of cutting down.

To get a picture of drinking habits, the Change4Life team asked 19 individuals to keep a detailed drinks diary for two weeks. The findings show those that took part were drinking on average the equivalent of an extra large glass of wine each day, or 40 per cent more that they thought.

After keeping a drinks diary for a week, people were offered simple tips on cutting down and as a result, they:

- cut their alcohol consumption by over a third;
- saved around £33.35 a week – or more than £1,750 a year; and
- consumed 1,658 fewer calories a week an average of 236 calories a day – around 10 per cent of the average person’s daily intake and the equivalent to 125ml (a small wine glass) of cream per day.

Participants also said that cutting down improved their physical and emotional well-being. And those involved also reported that adding more mixer to drinks and substituting alcoholic drinks with soft drinks were the most popular tips to include in their lifestyle.

Other tips for cutting down included having booze-free days if they drink every day, not drinking at home before going out, swapping to low-alcohol or alcohol-free drinks and simply using smaller glasses.

Dentist joins mouth cancer screening scheme

The Mouth Cancer Foundation has announced Dentist and advisory board member of the national dental journal, Dr Philip Lewis, as an Ambassador to the charity. Dr Lewis will become the lead consultant on the charity’s brand new life-saving initiative, the Mouth Cancer Screening Accreditation Scheme which launches in April.

The scheme aims to encourage all dental practices across the UK and Ireland to carry out a thorough head and neck cancer screening which can be done in under two minutes. The Mouth Cancer Foundation will recognise dental practices that demonstrate a visible commitment to increasing public awareness of mouth cancer screening to all patients and to establish a documented referral pathway with a local specialist department.

Mouth Cancer Foundation Ambassador Dr Philip Lewis says “I am delighted to work with the Mouth Cancer Foundation and honoured they have elected me to join their distinguished group of Ambassadors. I can think of no activity more important for dental professionals than the early detection of mouth cancer and look forward to helping in any way I can to promote the aims of the Foundation.”

Founder of the Mouth Cancer Foundation, Dr Vinod Joshi says “We are privileged to have such a well-respected dentist as Dr Philip Lewis as part of our ambassadorial team. I can think of no activity more important for dental professionals than the early detection of mouth cancer and look forward to helping in any way I can to promote the aims of the Foundation.”

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Call for dental plastics research bids

The Shirley Glasstone Hughes (SGF) Trust Fund has launched its annual competition for primary care dental practitioners to win up to £200k of funding for research.

The Fund is this year seeking applications for research projects that investigate the environmental and health benefits of plastic products in restorative dental materials.

Bids for the funding must come from teams led by a primary care dentist. Applicants have until Monday 29 April to submit their research proposals. Applications will be assessed by a panel of international experts, with the winning bid expected to be announced in September.

The Fund has also launched brand new web pages at www.bda.org/curiousabout. Dentists are invited to post questions and comments on four topics that have already been raised – patients’ attitudes to the phasing out of dental amalgam, occupational risks associated with clinical dentistry, the effects of cognitive behaviour therapy on phobic or fearful patients, and the relationship between dental and systemic disease – and contribute further suggestions of areas for investigation. Evidence summaries will be produced in response to suggestions, and areas for which an evidence base is lacking will be considered for the research grant competition in 2014.

Professor Elizabeth Kay, the Chair of the SGF Management Committee, said: “We are committed to supporting research in primary dental care. We believe that dentists being involved in, and aware of, research evidence creates a questioning culture which drives up standards and benefits oral health. I encourage all primary care dentists to join the debate at Curious About.”

Rebecca faces Marathon Challenge

Rebecca Beard, Marketing and Events Executive at Software of Excellence has more reasons than most to want to succeed in this year’s London Marathon. Having applied to run in aid of numerous charities and been rejected, Becky received an email from Breast Cancer Care offering her a place, just 88 days before the event itself.

The email arrived at a very opportune moment just days after Becky had received the devastating news that one of her close family is suffering from breast cancer:

“The email arrived, I just knew I had to say yes. The preparation time isn’t ideal, and I am not expecting to run the fastest time, in fact I will probably be well below average considering I haven’t even run for a bus in the last few months, but I am determined to complete the course, even if I have to crawl the last few miles.”

Becky has only a few weeks left to train and raise the £8,800 she has set as her fundraising goal, but with donations being pledged at a rate of £100 per day she is confident of making the target.

“Breast cancer affects so many people and I hope that when I cross the finishing line my efforts will help take a small step closer to finding a cure for this life changing and devastating illness. Together with the support of my family, friends and colleagues I am confident that we can achieve this goal.”

You can help Becky by making any donation, however small, simply visit http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/BexxLondonMarathon or to donate £1 just text BEXX47 to 70070.
A quarter of cancer patients face isolation

One in four (25 per cent) of the 25,000 newly diagnosed cancer patients in the UK – an estimated 70,000 patients each year - lack support from family and friends during their treatment and recovery, according to new research published by Macmillan Cancer Support. A third of those (seven per cent) – an estimated 20,000 people each year - will receive no help whatsoever, facing cancer alone.

The Facing the Fight Alone report – which looks at the number, profile and experiences of isolated people living with cancer - found more than half (55 per cent) of health professionals have had patients opt not to have treatment at all due to a lack of support at home from family and friends. Nine in ten (90 per cent) health professionals felt that a lack of support at home leads to a poorer quality of life for patients, whilst over half felt that it can lead to poorer treatment decisions (54 per cent) and a shorter life expectancy (56 per cent).

Ciarán Devane, Chief Executive of Macmillan Cancer Support, says: “This research shows that isolation can have a truly shattering impact on people living with cancer. Patients are facing cancer alone.”

ADI holds 25th anniversary team congress

How long do implants last? will be the focus of the Association of Dental Implantology’s (ADI) 2013 Congress. The UK’s largest implant association is hosting their biannual Congress from 1 – 5 May 2013 in Manchester, focusing on the complications, risk management and prognosis of implant treatment.

Delegates will be able to participate in lectures from internationally acclaimed speakers, visit the specialist implant exhibition and network with colleagues from the global implant industry. Attendees will benefit from the many networking opportunities on offer, including the ADI Oscars Bash, which takes place in the Midland Hotel on the Thursday night.

ADI President Professor Cemal Ucer says “Following decades of research and development, when patient demand and expectations are rising, we should address what are the real challenges and problems facing us today that affect the success and longevity of implant treatment? I am confident that the ADI 2013 Team Congress will answer this important question.”

The presentations will cover the full spectrum of topics relevant to anybody who is involved with dental implantology or is planning to enter the field. The Congress will feature lectures on the complete dental implant process, from consultation, placement and after-care to associated risks and complications. It will also include sessions on many specific aspects involved in the running of a dental implant service, such as legal considerations and managing patient expectations.

The Congress exhibition, open over the two days, will give delegates the chance to see the latest products, learn up-to-date techniques and meet industry leaders. Exhibitors to date include, BioHorizons, Biomet 3i, DENTSPLY Implants, G'estlich Biomaterials, Implantium, Megagen Implants, Nobel Biocare, Straumann and many more.

The ADI 2013 Team Congress takes place 1 – 5 May at the Manchester Central Convention Complex. Visit www.adi.org.uk/congress2013 for the full programme and to confirm your registration.

HEA and ASPiH join forces on two-year simulation initiative

A two-year joint project is underway between the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Association for Simulated Practice in Healthcare (ASPiH) to promote simulation-based education (SBE) in health and social care.

Launched with the support of the Department of Health (DH), the initiative will investigate how simulation is being integrated into health-care education curricula, develop and strengthen relevant communities of practice, inform the existing and future commissioning and quality assurance processes for the education and training of healthcare professionals, and influence policy in the field.

Professor Bryn Baxendale, President of ASPiH and Chair of the Project Strategy Group said: “Simulation can help learners prepare for the realities of clinical practice and enhance their level of readiness as a new graduate.

High quality SBE may also help relieve the pressures faced by courses heavily reliant on placement-based training as well as contributing towards improving quality and safety of patient care.”

The project has appointed a team of part-time regional Simulation Development Officers (SDOs). SDOs are establishing a stakeholder database, developing an evidence bank of current good practice which will inform and help define a future professional standards framework and building links with government bodies. They are also organising workshops, meetings and events. Their work is being coordinated by an operational group, chaired by the Project Lead.

Geoff Glover, Head of Health and Social Care and Assistant Director, HEA said: “This collaborative project is expected to create opportunities for ASPiH and the HEA to contribute to the recommendations within the overarching Department of Health Technology Enhanced Learning Framework in relation to SBE. It will support the development of strategic relationships within the new workforce development structures for health and social care at a national level.”

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