GDC in firing line

The General Dental Council's actions this month have caused outrage among the profession

The General Dental Council (GDC) has caused outrage among dental professionals this July with a proposed 64 per cent hike in Annual Retention Fees (ARF), followed by an advert placed in the Telegraph days later, advertising the Dental Complaints Service (DCS). The advert reportedly cost £60,000.

The GDC has said that the increase to the ARF is needed to cover the rising number of complaints against registrants. The proposal which would see the ARF for dentists increase to £945 a year and for DCPS to £128, a 64 per cent and 6.7 per cent increase respectively.

The announcement has since had a lot of backlash on social media, with one Twitter user tweeting “Fewer job prospects, less earning potential, increased retirement age and now higher ARFs” while another said “£945 #GDC ARF is prohibitive for early career dentists who are already struggling with other fees and student debt.”

An e-petition has also been released, asking the government to review the fee increase. At the time of writing, the petition has gained 15,583 signatures.

Mick Armstrong, chair of the British Dental Association’s Principal Executive Committee, said the increase in fees is ‘unacceptable’, especially as the latest Professional Standards Authority (PSA) report on the GDC was highly critical of the regulator.

He said: “The suggestion that the profession pay more to fund a Council that has been shown unable to do its job properly is frankly astonishing. The rise would be unpalatable at the best of times but now it appears that the profession is being asked to foot the bill for failure.”

Dr Armstrong added: “It’s not just huge rise in fees that has left the dental profession aghast, but, when dentists are expected to tolerate poor performance by the very body that is charged with the duty to assess their fitness to practise, we are justifiably outraged.”

The BDA has even called on Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt to initiate an urgent investigation into the competence of the GDC.

Approximately a week later, dental professionals were outraged yet again by the regulator twisting the knife, with one Twitter user saying: “GDC ‘forced’ to raise dentists’ fee to manage complaints but found encouraging dental complaints”, and another saying: “They’re honestly made me feel like chucking the towel in. Even our professional body is against us”.

The GDC has denied that the advert cost £60,000, stating in a press release that it cost £5,500.

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