News & Opinions

BDHF slams politicians

The British Dental Health Foundation has called on politicians to stop playing politics with people’s oral health, after the Tories made claims that dentists were overcharging patients, so they could make more money from their NHS contracts.

The Conservatives carried out an analysis of data from primary care trusts (PCTs) and claimed patients in England are being overcharged for NHS dental work by up to £109m a year.

The analysis suggested dentists could be recalling patients just weeks after their first treatment and then charging them twice.

The Conservatives asked every PCT in England how many patients were having to go back to their dentist within a three-month period for treatment and were paying more than once. They claimed the analysis revealed that dentists are pushing patients just over the two-month limit of what can be counted as one course of treatment, charging patients twice and therefore earning more money.

The shadow health secretary, Andrew Lansley, said: ‘The blame here lies with Labour’s botched dental contract, which incentivises dentists to increase the number of charges to patients and has led to such drastic cuts in the number of people being able to find an NHS dentist.’

However Health Secretary, Alan Johnson, said: ‘The question of whether dentists are fiddling the system to the tune of £109m – which is what Andrew Lansley is claiming, I think is wrong.’

The government recently appointed an independent committee to review NHS dentistry. One of its rules will be to look at the system and find out whether there is too much ’gaining’ in the system – of dentists calling people back just to make money.

In the wake of this furore, the British Dental Health Foundation (BDHF) is concerned that patients will be put off from having dental check-ups.

The BDHF’s chief executive, Dr Nick Carter said: ‘A million fewer people are visiting the dentist since the new contracts came into effect four years ago. Clearly dentists are not targeting contracts for easy money.

The government must address the issues, and the independent review is a start. The Opposition and the political elite should get behind this review and support a positive change.’

He added: ‘Negative messages run the risk undermining Britain’s oral health. For nearly 40 years we have campaigned with the key message advising people to visit their dentist regularly – as often as they recommend.

It is vital to get regular check-ups from an expert. This is so important to dental health, its systemic links to overall health issues such as diabetes, and in checking for mouth cancer, which kills one person every five hours in the UK.’

DDU launches more courses

The Dental Defence Union has again joined forces with experts from Kings College London to offer two further courses worth 12 hours of verifiable Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

The courses will be held in Stratford-upon-Avon on 25 and 26 February 2009 and will cover topics such as complaints, radiography, medical emergencies and infection control, all part of the General Dental Council’s recommended core CPD subjects.

Rupert Hoppenbrouwers, head of the DDU, said: ‘We had a great response from delegates who attended this year’s London CPD courses, which were fully subscribed, and we are looking forward to hosting them again in the West Midlands.

The courses are a great opportunity for all members of the dental team to hear leading experts discuss a broad range of important dento-legal issues. All delegates will receive a signed certificate confirming their completed CPD hours.’

He added: ‘Now that CPD is compulsory for Dental Care Professionals (DCPs), we are also delighted to be able to offer DCP members of the DDU a complimentary place on the course if they are accompanied by a full paying delegate.

Day one will include a combined session for dentists and DCPs on responding to complaints, presented by Bryan Harvey, deputy head of the DDU. There will also be a course in dental radiography and radiation protection for dentists and an interactive session for DCPs to help them understand the dento-legal environment.

On day two, Dr David Craig and Dr Chris Dickinson of Kings College London Dental Institute will present sessions covering medical emergencies and infection control. The day will conclude with an overview of legal and ethical issues, presented by Rupert Hoppenbrouwers, head of the DDU.

The courses cost £235 (one course) or £465 (both courses) for DDU members and £290 (one course) or £585 (both courses) for non-members.

DCPs who hold DDU membership can attend free when accompanied by a full paying delegate.

Dentists turn commando

The commandos completed the course in one hour and 15 minutes raising a total of £306.75 for the Devon Air Ambulance and Heroes charity.

Lisa McKinnon, area manager, said: ‘It was a fantastic day with all members leaving covered in mud, but having had a great time!’

For information please contact KaVo Dental Ltd

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The Estetica E80

£350

Commandos raised more than £130

The ‘commandos’ raised more than £350 for charity.

For easy money’

‘Dentists are not targeting contracts for easy money’