The new dental contract - full of holes and causing pain?

On March 6, the Patients Association launched a survey which asked Primary Care Trusts in England how they are responding to the new dental contract and the needs of their patients.

Patients Association demands

The Patients Association have acknowledged an educational grant from Denplan, which made work on the survey possible. As a result of the survey the Patients Association has called on the Government to:

- Examine the co-payments system for dentistry as the basis for expanding the availability of treatments elsewhere in the NHS.
- Ensure early diagnosis of serious oral illness e.g. cancer by giving patients the same level of prevention, e.g. regular oral checks, as those given to diabetics in the NHS. Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) must offer a complete and safe NHS dental service to their population, which was intended to be a main benefit of the new contract.
- Remove the postcode lotteries for patients which results from poor or weak commissioning by PCTs. Where PCTs offer an excellent, creative commissioning structure, they should take over the dental commissioning role of those that don’t. Renewed guidance on best practice in commissioning should be issued.
- Require PCTs and dentists to ensure patients are fully aware of the important changes to their NHS dental care and charges, thereby minimising patient anxiety and financial waste.
- Ensure the same level of coverage and availability of specialist treatments, e.g. root canal, orthodontics, as applies to other specialists in the NHS.
- Require PCTs to ensure dentists comply with latest infection control guidance.

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