The dental profession turned out in style earlier this month with black ties and posh frocks to hear who won what award at this year’s dental awards.

Held at The Royal Lancaster Hotel in London’s West End, there were entrants from across the country including Lanarkshire, Sheffield, London, Northern Ireland and Cardiff.

TV star Fred MacAulay compared the event, whipping the profession into a mood of humor and joviality with neck-breaking speed.

The traditional categories for the profession were joined this year by a new award, Product Innovation, which for the first time introduced the dental trade into the event. The inaugural award was won by Dental Design for its Oraqix anaesthetic and Optergo’s prism loupes.

The most surprised winner of the evening was Mary Newing MBE, who was thrilled to be the recipient of the Outstanding Achievement Award for her long years of service to the profession through her role as Editor on Dental Practice.

This year was the tenth anniversary of the Dental Awards, and it celebrated in style by the surprise appearance of Tenors and Dvicas Ignorants, who helped swing the 500-strong assembled audience into celebratory mood with renditions of classical aria and singalong favourites.

Commenting on the event, chair of the judging panel and editor of co-organisers The Probe Lisa Townshend said: ‘The awards evening was a fantastic night. I’d like to commend everyone who entered, but special congratulations go to all of our winners – you set an example of professionalism and care for your patients for all to follow.’

The Dental Awards 2008 was organised by Purple Media Solutions Ltd and the British Dental Health Foundation (BDHF). The event was sponsored by Denplan, The Dental Web, Software of Excellence, Sunstar and The Wrigley Company.

• The Winner in each category were:

1. Dentist of the Year
Winner: Hassan El-Nashar – El-Nashar Dental Care Ltd, Newton Abbot, Devon
Highly Commended: David Thomas – Thompson & Thomas, Sheffield

2. Hygienist of the Year
Winner: Pat Taylor – Forest Primary Care Centre, Edmonton, Enfield
Highly Commended: Sharon Ross – White Dental Spa, Alderley Edge, Cheshire

3. Team Support
Winner: El-Nashar Dental Care Ltd – Newton Abbot, Devon
Highly Commended: Smiling Essential – Leicester
Highly Commended: Woodseats Dental Care – Sheffield
Commended: Thompson & Thomas – Sheffield

4. Oral Health Promoter of the Year
Winner: Jill Allbutt – Fenton, Stoke on Trent

5. Practice Environment
Winner: All Saints Green Dental Clinic – Norwich
Highly Commended: The Smile Suite – Clifton, Bristol

6. Dental Nurse of the Year
Winner: Sarah McQueen – Cheltenham
Highly Commended: Sue Bird – The Smile Suite, Clifton, Bristol

7. Dental Receptionist of the Year
Winner: Alastair Hayes – Tidmouth Dental Care Centre, Alderley Edge, Cheshire
Highly Commended: Kirsty Barber – Park Road Dental Practice, Peterborough

8. Practice Manager of the Year
Winner: Cheryl Lawrence – Park Road Dental Practice, Peterborough
Highly Commended: Kate Carr – Stabley Lane Dental Centre, Sheffield
Highly Commended: Sue Bird – The Smile Suite, Clifton, Bristol

9. Dental Therapist of the Year
Winner: Lisa Bottrell – Ipswich

10. Dental Laboratory of the Year
Winner: Knight Dental Design – Plumstead Common, London

11. Best National Smile Month Event
Winner: Woodseats Dental Care – Sheffield

12. Technician of the Year
Winner: Alastair Hayes, Tividale Dental Centre, Walsall

13. People’s Award for Patient Care
Winner: Alastair Hayes, Tividale Dental Centre, Walsall

14. Outstanding Achievement Award
Winner: Mary Newing, MBE

15. Dental Practice of the Year
Winner: Gradora Dental Design – Gloucestershire
Highly Commended: Knight Dental Design – Alderley Edge, Cheshire

Extra dentists for Anglesey

The local Anglesey health board (LHB) has announced two new contracts to bring extra dentists to the west and east of the island – giving access to local treatment for another 4,000 patients. Back in January 2007, a mere third of Anglesey residents had access to an NHS dentist – forcing patients to travel as far as Liverpool to get treatment. The shortage saw a protest group collect more than 1,000 signatures in just days to voice anger at the massive hole in services. Anglesey LHB chief executive Lynne Joannou said: ‘These additional contracts should help to stabilise the provision of NHB dental services and improve access for members of this community. Work goes on to continually improve the situation and the oral health of the population of Anglesey.’ The local welsh Assembly member Ieuan Wyn Jones said: ‘The situation has improved but of course the provision in Anglesey has historically been far worse than in most parts in Wales and more needs to be done to increase access and ensure more NHS dental places.’
Periodontal disease maybe a ‘silent’ disease but it is a disease that needs radical attention from all. It’s far too easy to delegte the dis-ease to hygienists, but clearly the responsibility is too heavy for one pair of shoulders. So who to blame? Wes, it’s good pointing the finger at one sector isn’t it; For this is an issue that needs the help from dentists, primary care trusts (PCTs) and all equivalent bodies.

Unsurprisingly periodontal disease is barely recognised in the new contract, and with hygienist treatments costing £50 a go, this is a problem that’s not going anywhere. On top of that, getting an appointment with a local hygienist is like getting a ticket for Glastonbury. If you don’t call way before the plaque builds up, you have to pole-vault the walls to get an appointment.

So with two-thirds of the adult population suffering some form of periodontal disease we could all be donning gummy smiles pretty soon at this rate.

Nevertheless it is a preventable disease which does need the active involvement of the patient. But it takes effort and dedication so we have to be realistic. How many of us can really be bothered to floss day in and day out, followed by a thorough gurgling of aggressive mouthwash? It’s just another chore on the ‘to-do’ list that most people are just too tired to cross off.

However, the significance of this condition cannot be ignored. And although most of the studies reviewed are small scale, there is emerging, compelling evidence of the link between periodontal disease and systemic conditions such as diabetes and cardio-vascular disease. With the increase in obesity, the numbers diagnosed with type-2 diabetes have also risen.

For many years dentists have recognised that diabetics have poorer periodontal health. The key to this new research is that improved periodontal health can lead to better general health. For example, a reduction in periodontal disease for diabetics can lead to a small, but significant improvement in the patient’s blood sugar levels.

When diagnosed with type-2 diabetes patients are sent to an optometrist to check for signs of diabetic retinopathy, a condition which can lead to blindness. This (free) check is repeated annually. Yet how many doctors advise a newly diagnosed diabetic to seek an assessment of their periodontal health from a dentist? And how many doctors double-check that this assessment is repeated annually?

The answer in both cases is probably none; Even with exceptions the patient has to find a dentist, plus an extra £50 for the hygienist the following week.

So the time is here now where dentists and doctors should join hands to work this one out. And it’s a good time too for PCTs to offer diabetics free annual assessments. Enough said.

Penny Palmer
DT UK editor

Editorial comment
Joining forces

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