Editorial comment

Off with his head...

Yet again we have another ‘misguided’ decision this week only this time it’s to axe the Standing Dental Advisory Committee (SDAC). The BDA has done its bit by writing to Alan Johnson, MP, but whether it will make a difference remains a mystery. But the fact that there was ‘overwhelming’ support to keep SDAC, says it all. The profession’s respect for the Committee is apparent – but armed with the knowledge of its commitments to patient care and quality service is – ironically - disconcerting to say the least. For why, oh why would the government want to eliminate this professional authority, which has been a political stalwart in such uncertain times? If quality dentistry is key for the government, would it not make more sense to work more closely with SDAC instead of pushing it out the door? Or is the plan to weaken the profession further all part and parcel of a much bigger, bleaker picture? We hope not.

Okay, so we all know the old saying – the contract was rolled out without consultation...blah, blah, blah but then ‘ding!’ Let’s get rid of SDAC – for who needs a body that not only draws to ‘simple’ work to accumulate this extra cash or not? The evidence of less complex work is the talk of the profession. Crowns and bridges, and dentures have fallen by 57 per cent, while root canal treatments have decreased by 85 per cent. Should we be worried? These are not small changes by any means – so how do dentists earning more money than ever if they are doing less complex work? Or could it be that this is total rubbish? For by the time the money has been ‘clawed’ back from dentists who have ‘failed’ to meet the treatment targets set for them, these earnings are way, way over exaggerated.

And as the chief executive of the NHS Information Centre says: ‘The report reveals the pay of NHS dentists varies GREATLY depending on their contractual arrangements.' Erm, the government maybe? Oh and also the ‘second-best’ profession please sir. It doesn’t make sense – but never mind - let’s rest assured that there must be good reasons why. England’s CDO has got a new consultant adviser to complement the skills of his team after all, and apparently a ‘specialist’ from secondary care dentistry. Let’s wait and see what the Secretary of State is going to say in reply.

Big fat wallets?

If dentists are earning 15 per cent more under the new contract we should be happy right? (Who wouldn’t be happy with an overall income of MORE than £100,000?) Only there appears to be a few discrepancies here. Firstly – assuming the figures are accurate – is this a result of resorting to ‘simple’ work to accumulate this extra cash or not? The evidence of less complex work is the talk of the profession. Crowns and bridges, and dentures have fallen by 57 per cent, while root canal treatments have decreased by 85 per cent. Should we be worried? These are not small changes by any means – so how are dentists earning more money than ever if they are doing less complex work? Or could it be that this is total rubbish? For by the time the money has been ‘clawed’ back from dentists who have ‘failed’ to meet the treatment targets set for them, these earnings are way, way over exaggerated.

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Schottlander announces the winner
Mary Queen of Smiles

Mary Harrison, 72, from Whickham near Newcastle, is the winner of the 2008 Schottlander, Smile of the Year, competition for the denture wearer with the best smile in Britain.

Mary, who has worn dentures since she was 29, dazzled the judges with her radiant smile and won an Italian holiday.

She said: 'I had trouble with one tooth and my husband said to take the lot out. Times have changed, but a lot of people did that in those days.'

Mary has a real zest for life and keeps fit by going dancing and working out at the gym three times a week. 'I'm a very friendly happy person,' she said. ‘People always compliment my smile and say my teeth look great.’

Schottlander, launched the Smile of the Year campaign to recognise the millions of people of all ages in the UK who wear dentures and look good.

Dentures are worn by more than 11 million people in the UK, of which one million wearers are people between 16 and 44. Last year alone, the NHS in England and Wales provided dentures for more than 10,000 children and young people aged between six and 24, according to the Dental Practice Board.

Dr Brian Schottlander, whose company makes the award-winning denture systems, said: 'Today, with advances in technology, dentures can look so realistic and natural that they are indistinguishable from real teeth.'

Schottlander won the Queen's Award for Innovation for its Enigma & Natura range of teeth and denture systems.

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