Vinisha Sharma, 37, of Willenhall, West Midlands, posed as a dentist and worked on hospital patients despite having a lack of dental qualifications. She has since admitted forging her qualifications and earning £250,000 by deception.

Ms Sharma moved around England on annual contracts and worked in Wolverhampton and Burton-upon-Trent, in Staffordshire, before moving south to Southend and Basildon in Essex, Peterborough and Stamford, and finally East Grinstead in West Sussex.

Faked degree
Sharma failed her dentistry exams but then applied for temporary membership with the General Dental Council (GDC) in 2000.

It wasn’t until consultant Patrick Magennis contacted the Queen Victoria Hospital in East Grinstead in 2008 after he was concerned by her conduct and lack of veracity that Sharma’s past of deceit caught up with her.

However, her deception went unnoticed and after failing the paper exercise she required to gain full registration in 2008, her fraud went undiscovered yet again. Sharma was eventually charged after an investigation by the NHS Counter Fraud Service.

Successful entry to the GDC registers through fraudulent means remains exceptionally rare and the GDC stresses that they are “committed to doing all it can to prevent a repeat of this incident”. As a result, a review into Temporary Registration is underway.

The GDC said: “We have a strict system in place for registration, which includes potential registrants providing character references and a series of certified documents - including a certified copy of a passport and dental degree or diploma.

According to further reports, Eddie Crouch, from the Birmingham Local Dental Committee, said: “I think it’s important that the GDC carry out the specific checks on dentists who come into this country to work to ensure that they are adequately trained and qualified.

Sharma told investigators that she had “never had any complaints” from her patients and added that “invasive surgery is not something that you can teach yourself out of a book.”

Sentencing will take place during the week beginning 18 October.

Faked degree
Sharma failed her dentistry exams but then applied for temporary membership with the General Dental Council (GDC) in 2000.
Editorial comment

The GDC have not been having the greatest time of it lately. The decision to raise the Annual Retention Fee, although expected, still managed to cause much anger amongst registered professionals. Groups such as dental nurses are up that for many of them, £120 is a big hit to take just to be allowed to work. Dentists are also upset that £576 is not affordable for those such as associates and those working part time. People are also commenting on the fact that other necessary fees such as indemnity and the upcoming registration with the Care Quality Commission are placing a financial burden on practices just to be able to practise that is just not fair.

Top this anger with the recent story about a woman who was able to practise for several years without qualifications, despite being investigated and it doesn’t get much worse for the dental regulator.

Showcase is upon us for another year, and I’m looking forward to meeting with readers, partners and friends at one of the busiest events for me personally. I hope that those attending have a successful event, and manage to get a good deal on all those gadgets you’ve been after all year!

CQC Chair confirmed

Following an independent recruitment exercise by the Appointments Commission and a pre-appointment scrutiny hearing by the Health Select Committee, Health Secretary Andrew Lansley has announced that Dame Jo Williams has been appointed as the Chair of the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Dame Jo has been the acting Chair of the CQC since February 2010. Her previous roles consisted of being the Chief Executive of the Royal Mencap Society and the former President of the Association of Directors of Social Services, as well as a champion for social care services throughout a career in local government. She also Chairs the Prison Reform Trust and is a member of bodies advising the government on the third sector, carers, learning disabilities and children’s services.

According to reports, Dame Jo said: “I am delighted to be appointed Chair of CQC – but I don’t underestimate the challenges that lie ahead.”

“CQC will continue to drive improvement to ensure everyone has access to safe, quality services across the country, and I am thrilled to be a part of this.”

Dentistry Capitalising on Recession

“How to grow your dental business in an adverse economic climate”, as presented by Iain Forster, Managing Director of DIO UK, at the Royal Society of Medicine, London

Iain Forster, Managing Director of DIO UK, presented his marketing advice and ideas to delegates at the Royal Society of Medicine on Friday 3rd September. The 45-minute session was well attended and there was much interest shown both in the content of his presentation and the follow-up series of marketing workshops Iain is holding over the next few months to help dentists make the most of their marketing budgets.

In his presentation Iain said that it was a good time to be in dentistry, with the population increasing and costs decreasing. He also put a positive spin on the recession saying that companies that promoted heavily during a recession were often the first to emerge from it and the most successful in the following years.

Despite encouraging dentists to promote their services during a recession, Iain urged caution. He said that companies should not over spend and should test marketing methods to determine what worked best for them and focus on those that proved to be most successful. “It pays to start small and build confidence,” he said.

Iain was confident that the economic climate is right for dentists to promote their businesses as the country emerges from recession. He went on to explain that it is however essential that practices remain focussed, targeting those people with whom they already have a relationship before spending too much money looking further afield. He drew a distinction between internal marketing to reach out to the local population, educating their own practice teams and the importance of the internet; and external marketing that was designed to open up new markets over an extended period. “Internal marketing gives us business tomorrow,” he said. “External marketing gives us business next year!”

Bringing marketing right up to date Iain urged dentists that they should embrace social media and the opportunities it provides. Twitter, Facebook, Linked-In and many more all provide unprecedented opportunities for dentists to reach out to a wider market, for little or no cost. Not only are these outlets available to market their businesses, they provide unprecedented opportunities for those practices who do not want to be left behind as the old marketing techniques are superseded by newer, cheaper, more effective methods.

In closing Iain introduced the new “21st Century Dental Marketing” workshops which help dentists to take advantage of the opportunities they have available to market their businesses in the modern climate. The workshops cover:

• The use of PR and how to do it;
• Best practices for web page layout;
• How to use a CMS system to keep your website up to date;
• Maximising patient conversions;
• Pay-Per-Click (PPC) campaigns ... and much more.

To book your place on the next 21st Century Dental Marketing workshop, go to: www.dentalmarketinguk.com

Iain is now presenting his lecture as a free online webinar. Delegates can register for the online seminar by going to www.dentalwebinar.co.uk or visit http://www.dentala.co.uk/seminars/dentistrymarketing-webinar.html.

DIO Implant is a global supplier of dental implant technology. Established for over 20 years, DIO is rapidly expanding in the UK and has already taken a sizeable share of the market with its combination of high quality, sensible pricing and clear communication. The company’s focus on marketing education is part of its strategy to build effective and profitable business partnerships throughout the dental industry.

Further editorial information from: Charlotte Freestone The Words Workshop Ltd. Tel: 01908 695500 Fax: 01908 690099 E-mail: charlotte@thewordsworkshop.co.uk Web: www.thewordsworkshop.co.uk

Do you have an opinion or something you want to share? Dental Tribune UK article? Or would you like to write your own opinion for our guest comment page?

If so don’t hesitate to write to: The Editor, Dental Tribune UK Ltd, 4th Floor, Treasury House, 19-21 Hatton Garden, London, EC1 N 8RA

Or email: lisa@dentaltribuneuk.com

If you have an opinion you would like to share, would you like to write a guest comment page?
Finalists announced by DDU

The DDU has revealed the names of the six talented dental teachers who will vie for success at the 2010 DDU Educational Awards at the Royal Society, London on 17 November.

Earl Howe, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Quality with ministerial responsibility for dentistry, has agreed to give the keynote address and present the awards at this year’s event.

Rupert Hoppenbrouwers, Head of the DDU said: “We are delighted that Earl Howe has agreed to be involved in this way. It’s great for those working in dental education to receive this kind of recognition and we look forward to hearing his views.”

The finalists in each of the categories are:

- **Dental Care Professional Teacher of the Year**
  - Damien Walmsey, School of Dentistry, The University of Birmingham
  - Stephen J W Linsay, School of Physiology and Pharmacology, University of Bristol
  - George Aristidou, Kings College London

- **Teacher of the Year**
  - Jenny Owens, Leeds Dental Institute
  - Daniel Whiting, University of Liverpool
  - Damien Walmsley, School of Dental Sciences, University of Birmingham

- **Student of the Year**
  - Emily Beal, University of Surrey
  - Samantha Moore, University of Birmingham
  - Stephen J W Linsay, School of Physiology and Pharmacology, University of Bristol

- **Team of the Year**
  - The University of Manchester
  - The University of York
  - The University of Wales


e1m study into children’s tooth decay in South Wales

A £1m study has been set up to help prevent tooth decay in children who live in some of the most deprived communities of South Wales.

Around 2,800 pupils are set to take part in the study after reports showed a three-fold rise in tooth decay in children living in areas of deprivation, compared with those children who didn’t.

Working via mobile dental clinics, dental health workers will deliver a primary school-based dental prevention programme.

The study, which will carry out over three years, will be take place within Communities First areas in South Wales.

The money was awarded by the National Institute for Health Research to experts from Cardiff and Swansea universities and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board’s Community Dental Service.

Children taking part in the study will have one of two available treatments: plastic sealants on the biting surface or fluoride varnish on the tooth surface.

Following their treatment, the children will have check-ups throughout a three year period so experts can investigate the effectiveness of the two forms of tooth decay prevention techniques.

Professor Chestnutt Ivor Chestnutt, a consultant in dental public health from Cardiff University’s school of dentistry will be leading the study said; “Both of these treatments have been around for many years and have been shown to work.

“To know which works best and what treatments are the most acceptable from the perspective of the children, their parents, the dental staff carrying out the treatments, and the schools in which the treatment will be delivered, will be of tremendous value to the National Health Service.” Professor Chestnutt Ivor Chestnutt said.

Rochdale gets the Dental CATS

By March 2011, residents in Rochdale and the surrounding area will benefit from an improved dental service. The announcement comes after NHS Heywood, Middleton and Rochdale confirmed that a new service, known as the new Dental Clinic Assessment and Treatment Service (Dental CATS), will be available to treat patients who are in need of specialist treatment.

The new service will operate from the Phoenix Centre in Heywood and The Langley Dental Practice in Middleton; however, the location for the service in Rochdale is still to be confirmed.

The new service, which has been confirmed by the PCT, will hopefully provide patients with opportunities to receive treatments closer to their home and as a result, the workload of hospital staff will be reduced.

The news comes as a great relief with regards to the increase in doctors who have reported an increase in the number of dental cases being treated in hospital.

According to reports, this increase has placed greater pressure on NHS medical resources and with the new system in place patients can be ensured that doctors have the time and resources to deal with medical patients.

Many patients will also be comforted by the fact that they no longer have to go to hospital for dental treatments; for many people, going to hospital is a daunting experience, and many can feel nervous – however, the new system means that such anxieties can be taken away.

John Pierce, chairman of the local PCT, said the new service was one of many initiatives being launched to improve NHS dental services in the area; over the last two years, more than a million pounds have been invested in the area and further improvements are set to follow.

The CATS service will be used for patients over 18 on the condition that they are registered with a local GP; patients who have severe symptoms which may suggest a more serious health condition may still be referred to hospital, as they may require specialist medical care.