COC: “Let’s start talking again”

Care Quality Commission Director makes commitment to re-engage with the dental profession

At a recent debate on dentistry, the ‘new’ new contract and regulation within the dental sector, Care Quality Commission (CQC) director of operations Amanda Sherlock announced her commitment to reopen dialogue with the dental profession to ‘move regulation to a place where it is proportionate and workable’.

Acknowledging the difficult start to the profession’s relationship with the CQC, Ms Sherlock was very frank and honest about the problems that the regulator has had in getting to grips with registering more than 9,000 dental practices across England, and how there is a high level of mistrust and a low level of confidence within the profession for the CQC.

Calling on all members of the profession to engage with the CQC, Ms Sherlock said: “What I want to do is start a conversation.”

“The CQC needs to engage with the profession so that we can develop our services to a place where we want to be. There needs to be a meaningful relationship between ourselves as the regulator and the dental profession as the regulated.”

Discussing the expectations that all stakeholders in the process have, she discussed the current situation from three viewpoints: the regulator, the customer (meaning patient, Ms Sherlock commented that she preferred the term customer as it gave more of a connotation that she was involved in treatment decisions); and a member of the public. She stated that since taking up her post at the CQC in April this year she has become aware of an ‘over-focus’ in regulation. This, she said, is something she wants to address, again making reference to ‘proportionate, simplified and sensible regulation’.

Announcing a wide-scale review of CQC’s processes throughout its systems, Ms Sherlock added: “To further develop, the CQC and the profession needs to establish a real partnership so that there can be understanding about what is necessary to ensure good practice and to stamp out any examples of bad practice.”

Dental Tribune is looking to speak with Ms Sherlock about registration and regulation of dentistry, and would like to put your views and queries to her. Email lisa@dentaltribuneuk.com using the subject line of CQC questions with any questions or comments you may have for the regulator, and we will endeavour to get as many as we can answered.

A breathing space
This week’s announcement that 2012-13 entrants will see their year five fees fully covered by the bursary is a good short-term solution that provides breathing space for a longer-term solution to be agreed. The British Dental Association (BDA), has been lobbying for what looks like a huge gap in student finance that could have been seen next year for those students applying for courses this year without knowing the size of the financial commitment they were making. Other representative bodies have been lobbying for a resolution of the situation which appeared to run against the Government’s own policy on ensuring free access to the professions for young people. But it is clear that the solution is a stopgap measure for a single year’s cohort of entrants to dental and medical degrees, leaving a longer-term solution still to be negotiated.

Sex doll inspired robot
Researchers in Japan have developed a dental training robot that can sneeze, shake its head, cough, gag, and even close its mouth when feeling a jaw ache. The robot was created by researchers at Japan’s Showa University, with help from the country’s top sex doll manufacturer Orient Industry to make it as life like as possible. The robot, called Showa Hanako 2, features voice recognition and once a check-up is over, the robot will store and analyse each student’s performance, providing feedback which can be accessed online. The Showa Hanako robot was first developed 10 years ago, but this revised second version is more realistic.

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