DENTAL TRIBUNE

The World's Dental Newspaper · United Kingdom Edition

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News in brief

'Comedy' dentures

Americans think comic star, Ricky Gervais, has such bad teeth they must be comedy dentures.

Gervais who plays a dentist in his new film '*Ghost Town*' said he was 'dismayed' when an American journalist said his teeth were so awful they must be fake.

The star who found fame through the TV series *The Office* said he told the journalist 'These are my own teeth. Would I be wearing joke teeth to an interview? I also felt I had to point out, I'm not wearing a fat suit either. She was a bit embarrassed.'

Eroding enamel

The use of low pH mouthwashes erodes dental enamel causing the teeth to become more sensitive, according to recent study.

Researchers at the Division of Restorative Dentistry in Bristol, found people with less enamel complained of much greater tooth sensitivity to hot and cold.

The study looked at three low pH mouthwashes.

Results showed that enamel loss in situ and in vitro was progressive over time with all three mouthwashes.

As a result of the study, the researchers recommended that low pH mouthwashes should not be considered for long term or continuous use and should never be used prior to brushing.

Pay rises

NHS Employers have called for pay rises for dentists in 2009/10 to be limited to two per cent.

It argues that a balance has to be struck between fairness to staff and affordability.

In evidence submitted to the Doctors' and Dentists' Review Body, NHS Employers said it recognised that 'inflationary pressures and efficiency expectations are putting pressure on services and any unfunded cost pressures from pay could threaten patient care'.

Employers within the NHS believe an award of two per cent would be affordable for dentists who are employed by the NHS, providing there is a corresponding uplift in the funding allocation for 2009/10.

NHS Employers also argues that there should be no change to the General Dental Services (GDS) contract, in the light of increases in the 2008/09 award (recommended 3.4 per cent), against a backdrop of decreasing expenses for dental practices.

www.dental-tribune.co.uk

News and opinions

Amazing feats

An orthodontist wins a trophy at the BOS conference for turning a 14-year-old boy's life around through exceptional work.

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Money Matters

Legal practice

You have to know the rights and wrongs inside and out when it comes to employment law. David Seals paves the way forward.

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DCPs

Anxious talk

Dealing with anxious patients is a bit like waiting for a time bomb to go off, but if you handle them gently you can defuse the worry.

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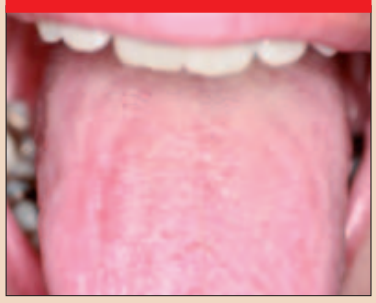
Clinical



Oral links

So is there really a link between oral and systemic health? *Dental Tribune* reports back from a scrutinising conference on the subject.

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BACD: research foreign dentists

People thinking of travelling overseas for dental treatment are being urged to shop around in Britain before going abroad.

The British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (BACD) has warned potential patients that they need to carefully research the dentist who may be carrying out the work.

This is because they will be away for a limited amount of time and as such any procedures may be done 'a bit more quickly' than they would be in the UK, said the BACD.

Tif Qureshi, board member of the BACD recommends that people check out the foreign dentist's portfolio.

The medical tourism industry is doing so well at the moment that London has just hosted the Health Tourism Show 2008, a new event covering practically every aspect of medical, dental, cosmetic and health treatment abroad.

The event which claims to be the first of its kind in the world, showcased clinics from about 20 countries, offering everything from cardiology to breast enlargement and dental work.

Organisers of the show, held at London's Kensington Olympia, claim the credit crunch is making people more reluctant to shell out for expensive treatment in the UK and more adventurous about seeking a cheaper option abroad.

They also claim that the shortage of NHS dentists in Britain means dental treatment overseas is getting increasingly popular because it is cheaper than the UK.

One Portuguese clinic at the show offering dental holidays in the Algarve, Multiclinica Medefidental, provides dental implants priced at 800 euro (£635) each.

However Britain's leading oral health charity is warning people to be cautious over these 'dental tourism bargains'. British Dental Health Foundation chief executive Dr Nigel Carter said: 'The Foundation recommends patients thinking of travelling for their treatment to keep their eyes open to potential pitfalls. It is very much a case of 'buyer beware'.

'It is important that anyone considering travelling is aware of potential risks. If there are any complications after treatment abroad, there could be all sorts of questions arising. For example, are you willing to fly back? What are your legal rights as a foreign patient? Do you have the money required for corrective treatment in this country, if required? Plus who will pay if things go wrong?'

The BDHF, recommends patients shop around in the UK before considering travelling abroad.

Cash plans, maintenance schemes and capitation plans can all help make UK dental treatment more affordable. DT

Ex-dental chief tells lies

The former chairman of the British Dental Association (BDA) has been struck off by the General Dental Council for fraudulently claiming £51,000 in expenses from the BDA.

Trevor Mann, of Sutton in Surrey, claimed expenses for meetings at the BDA from October 2005 to July last year.

He said that he worked at a surgery in Byfleet, Surrey, but an investigation found there was no trace of the practice.

The professional conduct committee report said: 'Mr Mann quite clearly lied to Mr Ward about the scope and status of his practice'

It added: 'From 6 October 2005 to 27 July 2007, Mr Mann inappropriately and dishonestly claimed from the BDA sessional allowances stating that he had read the BDA expenses policy and was entitled to claim sessions for Monday to Friday. This too was misleading and dishonest.

Mr Mann's dishonesty was compounded by the fact that the claims were made over a sustained period of time and were not isolated incidents.'

The report concluded: 'The Committee hereby directs the Registrar to erase the name of Trevor Irvin John Mann from the Dentist Register'.

A spokesman for the BDA said: 'The British Dental Association notes the conclusion of the case it referred to the General Dental Council. All of the money inappropriately claimed from the BDA has been repaid.The BDA now considers that the case is closed.'

Mr Mann did not attend the hearing at the GDC. DT

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Incentives tempt Scottish graduates

Scottish dental students are urged to stay put

Graduate dentists at a new dental school in the north east of Scotland are being offered incentives to remain in the area and practise as NHS dentists.

The new Aberdeen Dental School will produce 15 graduates this year and 20 fully-qualified dentists every year after.

Graduates will be offered incentives to remain in the region as NHS dentists.

The dental school, which has received £21m of funding from the Scottish Government and NHS Grampian, will have facilities for radiography and restorative dentistry as well as dental laboratories.

Public Health Minister Shona Robison said: 'The Aberdeen Dental School will be a centre of excellence for the north of Scotland and an important asset for the whole country.

'Young dentists who train at the school will provide a significant boost to the numbers of trained practitioners in our country, helping to bring NHS dentistry within reach of more and more people.'

North-east Lib Dem MSP Mike Rumbles called it 'a step in the right direction' but added 'it is not the solution to the problem, which is what the government seem to think it is. It is not a fully-fledged school, it is a post-graduate facility.

'What the government has done is not good enough because the school should be producing at least 60 dental students a year, not 15.' DT

NHS dentistry abroad

The government is carrying out a consultation on an EU directive that will allow patients to ask the NHS to pay for their dental treatment abroad.

It is asking for the views of healthcare professionals, patient groups, health organisations and the public on the new Patient Mobility EU Directive.

The government wants to make sure the directive does not adversely affect the NHS' ability to plan and manage services – and ensure patients can only access services to which they are entitled to on the NHS.

Public health minister Dawn Primarolo said: 'We want to ensure that, where UK patients choose to travel abroad for care, the NHS retains the ability to decide what care it will fund.

Equally, anyone from other member states travelling to the UK specifically for healthcare will have to pay the full NHS cost of treatment upfront.'

She emphasised that the government is 'committed' to providing high quality healthcare close to patients' homes.

The consultation will help formulate the UK's negotiating position when discussions on the directive are held by Council of EU health ministers on 15-16 December.

The consultation closes on 3 December. DT

Stripping for charity

Dental patients in Sunderland have agreed to be photographed wearing nothing but a smile for a saucy charity calendar.

Riveredge Cosmetic Dentistry practice in Sunderland decided it wanted to do a charity calendar after losing its manager, Amanda Fisher, to bowel cancer three years ago.

The calendar features the Riveredge team, Rugby League player Paul Sculthorpe and nine Riveredge patients.

Lesley Collard, practice manager, said: 'We were keen to do something a bit different to support St Oswald's, the hospice that looked after Amanda so well. We were all pretty nervous about doing the calendar, but it was great fun and for a great cause.'

Three cancer charities are set to benefit from the venture including St Oswald's Hospice, where the Ms Fisher, was treated before she died.

The 2009 *Wearing Nothing but a Smile* calendar costs £10. It can be bought by calling the Sunderland clinic on 0191 567 1020. DT

CDO opens new dental school

The government's Chief Dental Officer has officially opened a new dental training school in East Lancashire.

Before unveiling the official plaque, Barry Cockcroft met dental students who are training at the centre.

The £2.2m Oak House NHS Dental Centre will act as a training facility for new dentists and for dental therapy students and is one of the first new dental schools to be opened in nearly 100 years.

The aim is to train 'home-grown' dentists for the future, with the hope that they will stay and work in the area where they have trained.

The centre also has four purpose-built, NHS dental surgeries which act as a new base for the local NHS out-of-hours emergency dental service.

The centre is part of a project between the Preston-based University of Central Lancashire and the Universities of Liverpool, Lancaster, and Cumbria, together with East Lancashire Primary Care Trust (PCT) and the North West Strategic Health Authority.

The new four-year, graduate-entry dental course has already recruited its first 32 students, who will spend time at the £5.2m dental school in Preston before eight of them come to East Lancashire for their clinical experience.

David Peat, chief executive of East Lancashire PCT, said: 'We are delighted and proud to have played a part in getting this new dental school up and running.

It's one of the first new dental schools to be set up in more than a century, which is quite an achievement in itself. All credit to the partnership that has made it possible.

We see this as a major opportunity to train our own NHS dentists of the future, while helping local people as the trainee dentists do their supervised practical work.' DT

Quality teachers compete

Some of the best practitioners in dental education will be battling it out for the title of teacher of the year in the 2008 DDU Educational awards.

Rupert Hoppenbrouwers, head of the Dental Defence Union said: 'The finest teachers are able to communicate their enthusiasm for dentistry, as well as their knowledge of the subject, to students and newly qualified dentists.

These qualities are always evident in our finalists, so we look forward to some interesting and inspiring presentations and, as ever, I'm sure it will be tremendously difficult to choose a winner.'

Two finalists have been selected from a shortlist of nominees in three categories.

Overall winners in each category will receive £1,000 towards the cost of educational materials for their schools or Vocational Training (VT) schemes.

All the finalists will receive £250, and an award.

The DDU Educational Awards are sponsored by Dentsply and supported by the British Dental Association (BDA).

This year's awards are being held at London House, Goodenough College, London on Wednesday 19 November.

The theme for the event is Education, Ethics and Aesthetics and in the afternoon there will be a series of presentations on cosmetic dentistry, from the ethics of cosmetic treatment, to the challenges of defending dental professionals against allegations about their aesthetic practice.

The two finalists in each category are:

- Dentist teacher of the Year: D Samarawickrama of Barts and the London School of Medicine and Dentistry and Sheila Oliver of Cardiff University Dental School
- VT Teacher of the Year: Stephen Brookes from the Oxford Deanery and Dai Jones from South West Dental Postgraduate Deanery
- DCP Teacher of the Year: Alison Grant of Bristol Dental School and Judy Fraser of University of Portsmouth, School of Professionals Complementary to Dentistry DT

New links for CIC

Smile-on is joining forces with the international dental association, Alpha Omega, to hold next year's Clinical Innovations Conference.

The conference in 2009 will bring together the Clinical Innovations Conference and the Annenberg Lecture.

Dr Nitzan Bichacho and Dr Dubi Schwartz-Arad will present the Annenberg Lecture 'Success factors in dental implantation: a multi-disciplinary approach between the surgeon and the prosthodontist', on 15 May 2009.

On 16 May, delegates can take part in a series of lectures and hands-on sessions.

A spokeswoman for Smile-on said: 'Alpha Omega promotes lectures, seminars and study groups. Its partnership with Smile-on is set to provide delegates with a rich educational experience.'

Nassar Barghi will be speaking at CIC

The 2009 Clinical Innovations Conference will be held at the Royal College of Physicians in Regent's Park, London.

For more information, or to make a booking, please call 0207 400 8989 or email info@smile-on.com DT

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Editorial comment

UDAs in translation?

It's a sad state of affairs that the British public is resigned to booking dentistry appointments away from an otherwise civilised country. Flying abroad to get the basics done is a shambles – period, but then being urged to investigate the dentist they are seeing as well makes a mockery of the UK dentistry system. So now patients are combining their holidays around implants and fillings. Some people might think that if they can fork out for a holiday as well as their dental treatment - albeit abroad - then they must be able to afford it. But if the treatment they need is going to take a week or two then they have to find somewhere to stay. Plus who wants to stay away from their family for that long anyway?

> 'Why waste time faffing around on a new consultation anyway when really their efforts could be used elsewhere?'

So shows like the Health Tourism Show 2008 has its place, and if Portuguese clinics can offer cheaper implants with a comfortable hotel to boot who wouldn't be tempted? Nevertheless let's not be too damning. With the government carrying out a consultation on an EU directive that will allow patients to ask the NHS to pay for their dental treatment abroad, things could be looking up. It is asking for the views of healthcare professionals, patient groups, health organisations and the public on the new Patient Mobility EU Directive. As public health minister Dawn Primarolo said last week: 'We want to ensure that, where UK patients choose to travel abroad for care, the NHS retains the ability to decide what care it will fund.' And this is great is it not? Perhaps. But how will they work out what UDA band fits what treatment if the treatment they have done is above and beyond any of the UK bands? Moreover, why waste time faffing around on a new consultation anyway when really their efforts could be used elsewhere, i.e. finding new ways to attract the UK's profession back into NHS dentistry, and increasing more dental students a year.

Handing out incentives to new graduates is one way of encouraging some dentists to stay put and work in the NHS. It's already happening in the north east of Scotland at the Aberdeen Dental School. But are the incentives big enough to keep the graduates away from the much greener grass?

Opening new training schools is of course another step in the right direction – our CDO opened another one in East Lancashire, and is one of the first dental schools to be opened in 100 years. David Peat, chief executive of East Lancashire PCT, is understandably thrilled with the new school. As he says: 'We see this as a major opportunity to train our own NHS dentists of the future, while helping local people as the trainee dentists do their supervised practical.' Whatever happens with dental tourism and the UK's profession, it's always worth remembering our glass is never half empty – but always half full. DT

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

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Orthodontist changes a boy's life

A specialist orthodontist has won first prize in a national competition for changing a boy's life through orthodontic treatment.

Orthodontist, John Costello at Total Orthodontics in Tonbridge, Kent, was awarded the trophy for 'Against the Odds' at the British Orthodontic Society's annual conference.

Mr Costello was given first prize for his orthodontic work on 14-year-old James McAuliffe.

James first visited Mr Costello a few days before his 11th birthday in early 2004 when it was discovered he would not develop four adult teeth - the two either side of his contrastingly large front teeth.

X-rays revealed that four upper front teeth were missing and when his milk teeth fell out he would be left 'Bugs Bunny-like' with two front teeth in isolation.

The first thing, Mr McAuliffe did was make James a temporary removable retainer brace which had four false adult-sized teeth fixed to it.

The false teeth were shaped in such a way that they slotted over James' milk teeth and gave him the appearance of a complete dentition and to anyone else he looked like any normal 11-year-old boy with a retainer brace.

James wore the retainer for about a year during the day and had a head brace at night which was designed to make more space for the teeth that would be created to replace his own baby incisors.

The headgear was attached to the molars at the back of his mouth and helped to draw these backwards opening up space for the front teeth to be moved using braces and bands.

Mr McAuliffe created an orthodontic appliance with a fixed plate that was moulded to the top of James' mouth, which again had false teeth affixed to it.

With his natural teeth now in the right position and firmly settled, James finally had a bridge fitted to allow permanent replacement teeth to be fitted, and these were fixed to his natural teeth which had been moved to allow space for the four new teeth. This completed the streamlined appearance of his upper teeth allowing him to smile for the first time in years.

James said: 'My teeth now look absolutely amazing. It's so hard to put into words what a difference my treatment has made. I am now a really confident person and always love to flash people a smile - all thanks to John. All the hard times have been finally worth it and thankfully the bad memories are already fading.' DT

Before

After

Dentist is suspended

A dentist has been suspended, after he contravened guidelines by the General Dental Council, by working without a dental nurse.

Philip Yellowley, who worked at Hove Court Dental Centre in Hove, East Sussex, was suspended for six months by the General Dental Council's (GDC) interim orders committee on October 13.

He faces a disciplinary hearing in London early next year.

Mr Yellowley is accused of contravening GDC guidelines by working without a dental nurse.

The GDC was also told that Mr Yellowley had failed to complete clinical treatment, repeatedly cancelled patients' appointments and in one case, failed to follow up a diagnosis, which could have had serious consequences for the patient.

Mr Yellowley left the practice earlier this year but was allowed to carry on working under stringent conditions set by the GDC.

These conditions meant that he had to inform the GDC if he was employed elsewhere and ordered him to work under the supervision of another dental practitioner.

His suspension now means he is not allowed to treat patients in Britain for six months.

The dental centre has carried on operating as normal as the allegations only concern Mr Yellowley.

Mr Yellowley is also accused of using the name of a former employee of his practice to order an appliance from a dental technician and equipment from a supplier.

He had been working at the practice for over 20 years and told the GDC that he disputes the allegations made against him.

Mr Yellowley's suspension is recorded on the GDC's online registers, which are available to check at ***www.gdc-uk.org*** DT

London dentist treats Cambodians

Ms Pink is treating orphan children in Cambodia

A London dentist has just spent two weeks in Cambodia treating orphan children who have never been to a dentist.

Lydia Pink, a dentist at Annobil's dental practice in Tower Bridge Road was accompanied on the trip by two dental therapists. On arrival they worked alongside the Sultan of Brunei's former dentist who set up the project in Cambodia.

He is working full-time with nurses to help the children, many of whom are orphans or are disabled. Most of the children have HIV and are working in rubbish tips to survive.

Much of Ms Pink's work included preventative treatment and the team was able to present a year's supply of fluoride treatment to 10 schools in the country.

Many patients from the Tower Bridge Road practice gave money to help finance the trip

In 2005, during her final year at King's Dental Institute at Guy's Hospital in London, Ms Pink ran a mobile dental clinic in Vietnam with two fellow students. On their trip they performed a hundred extractions and filled 150 teeth. None of the children had seen a dentist before.

Ms Pink is planning to return to Cambodia in six months. Anyone wishing to donate towards further equipment can contact Lydia Pink at **thepinkdentist@googlemail.com** DT

One-stop health complexes

An ex-dentist is turning medical practices into one-stop health complexes offering people access to dentists, doctors and opticians all on the one site.

Philip Lunnon of Ettrick Health Ltd ran several dental practices in Teesside, before selling the business in 2003 to concentrate on the development of health and social care premises.

He is developing Low Grange Health and Residential Care Village at Greater Eston, a 'one-stop integrated health and social care complex' that will include a health village and eventually residential care facilities.

The first phase of the £17m scheme - a partnership between Ettrick Health, Redcar and Cleveland Primary Care Trust and Redcar and Cleveland Council - will consist of four GP practices, a pharmacy, optician's and an NHS dental surgery.

This is expected to open in April 2010.

The second phase, which is due to open in March 2011, will provide residential care, nursing care and specialist care for the elderly and young people with disabilities. When fully completed, the scheme will provide more than 70,000sq ft of healthcare, residential and public service facilities.

Mr Lunnon has revealed there are plans for similar developments in the pipeline. DT

Cycle ride raises £5k

Cyclists raised over £5,000 for the oral health charity Dentaid by completing the C2C cycle across the north of the UK.

The ride was organised as part of the Denplan partnership, with the majority of the riders from Denplan practices.

It followed the famous 140 mile route, starting in Whitehaven travelling through the northern Lake District and finishing in Tynemouth.

Jenni Phillips, part of the support team for the cyclists said: 'The nine cyclists not only battled some huge hills, but also the harsh elements, as they continuously faced heavy rain, gales and flooding I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who supported Dentaid and took part in the bike ride, it was great to see everyone's enthusiasm and commitment to the ride and Dentaid's work. There were some tough conditions but everyone did amazingly well.' DT

YouTube dental advice

More and more Britons are watching their pennies because of the credit crunch and are trying to do their own teeth whitening after taking advice from YouTube.

Dr Prav Solanki, founder of the *Cosmetic Dentistry Guide* – a website that offers guidance and information for anyone considering cosmetic dental treatment, claims people are putting their health at risk by getting advice from YouTube rather than a qualified dentist.

'Our dentists have reported more cases of people turning up with damaged teeth and gums after trying to do their own teeth whitening,' said Dr Solanki.

He called YouTube home videos 'irresponsible and dangerous' for showing people how they brush hydrogen peroxide straight onto the teeth.

Dr Solanki added that some over-the-counter products are 'fine in principle' but without the expert guidance of a dentist, he warned that patients could be causing themselves damage that will cost more in the long-run. DT

Me & Henry Schein

"When we opened our new practice, cashflow was a key priority for us. We operate a "just in time" ordering system so that we don't have too much money tied up in stock and Henry Schein Minerva's stock audit makes this much easier. We regularly order on-line and because we know we can rely on Henry Schein Minerva's excellent service and delivery, we can maximise our cashflow and credit terms."

Alex & Abby – Michael Dental Care, Cheltenham

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Taking the plunge!

Briercliffe Road Dental Practice in Burnley could be considered by some as an unlikely place to find a thriving, dynamic private dental practice. Helen Powell – Practice Manager and wife of Dentist Mike Powell, explains their journey into Private Practice and how help came from an unexpected source.

The practice stopped taking adult NHS patients in March 2003, - now, 5 years later they are really experiencing the benefits of what, at the time, seemed to be a momentous decision. Mike's commitment to providing high quality treatment and the looming NHS contract changes were the real driving forces behind their decision and although they knew that similar decisions were being taken by many practitioners, their location, in a less than prosperous area of North West England, made the decision to become a private practice more difficult. Up until 2003, their patient base had grown steadily, as they had picked up patients from practices around them who had taken the private road years before and they were worried that their decision would result in a loss of patients. In fact, they had one of the most successful single handed Denplan conversions ever, with over 1,000 of their patients becoming enrolled in one way or another. Mike and Helen had a visit from Steve Gates, Denplan's MD and were asked to talk on several occasions to groups of dentists considering a Denplan conversion.

Since converting to private practice they have received a great deal of help in establishing and driving their business forward and at the forefront of much of their endeavours was help which came from what some may see as an unexpected source. Alistair Newsham – who Mike and Helen had known for many years, came to see them in the middle of 2003. He had recently been taken on by Henry Schein Minerva in the role of Business Consultant and came to tell them about his new role and how it might be of interest to them. Naturally, having known and trusted Alistair for a number of years Mike and Helen were keen to explore any ways in which they could add to their now steadily growing private practice. Alistair explained to them that Henry Schein Minerva's philosophy was to help practitioners maximise profitability by helping them to run successful businesses. A philosophy that encourages those running the practice to look at the "bigger picture" and not get too obsessed with comparing the relative costs of a box of gloves!

From the outset, Alistair encouraged them to think about where they wanted their practice to be in the future and helped them to pinpoint where they could improve productivity and efficiency. Most of the ideas Alistair put forward would be straightforward for most large, established businesses, but for a small business like Mike and Helen's it was nothing short of a revelation.

They have incorporated a number of marketing ideas, mostly based on the advice given by Alistair and their marketing now extends to almost every area of the practice. Some activities are naturally more costly than others, but they all contribute to the growth of new patients and the delivery of excellent service and treatments to their existing ones.

Staff training is a vital element in effective marketing and when Mike and Helen decided that a dedicated Treatment Co-ordinator would be a good addition to their practice, Henry Schein Minerva arranged for another of their Consultants to visit the practice from Scotland. Gillian spent time with Mike and Helen explaining the role of Treatment Co-ordinator and how they could make this work in their practice. This role is still in its early stages but Mike has already seen the benefits of having someone else to assist the patient in treatment choices.

Since their conversion to private practice and through the undoubted help of Alistair and the team at Henry Schein Minerva, Helen has reassessed how she spends her time.

"As Practice Manager I can now see the value of spending time working on aspects of the practice that will build our patient base, rather than searching through catalogues saving pennies on a couple of products. Ironically, by putting the bulk of our orders through Henry Schein Minerva we were able to negotiate extra discount anyway. Of course, we still take advantage of good value savings, but it has become much less of a driving factor for me."

Since 2003, and as they gained more confidence, Mike and Helen have followed a series of business programmes that they are certain have contributed to their success. In 2005, they achieved Investors in People, BDA Good Practice Award and completed their hat trick with the Denplan Excel accreditation, awarded in May 2005. As a team, Mike and Helen feel it is important to measure themselves regularly against these external standards, ensuring they are the best they can possibly be. Of course time does not stand still and Mike and Helen continue to be pushed and prodded by Alistair, with the backing of Henry Schein Minerva, to set objectives and achieve more for the benefit of their patients. "Our immediate goals for the practice are to make sure we make much better use of our intra-oral camera; - equipment we have had for over 5 years! Alistair has given us the idea of doing "mouth tours", to encourage patients to take more responsibility for their oral health and to ask patients what improvements they would like to see. We are also exploring the sale of Oral Hygiene products in practice and how we can maximise the potential of this part of our service."

The decision to go private is not an easy one, it is very hard work, but it was definitely the right one for Mike and Helen and although times are changing and they know they will lose a percentage of their patients as some new NHS practices spring up around them, they are quietly confident that discerning patients will see the benefits they have to offer. "Our practice is busy and Mike has no desire to be more than a single handed practitioner, so for us, success is built around having a great team and being able to provide high quality dental treatment to motivated, enthusiastic patients in a pleasant and comfortable environment.

For more information email: me@henryschein.co.uk

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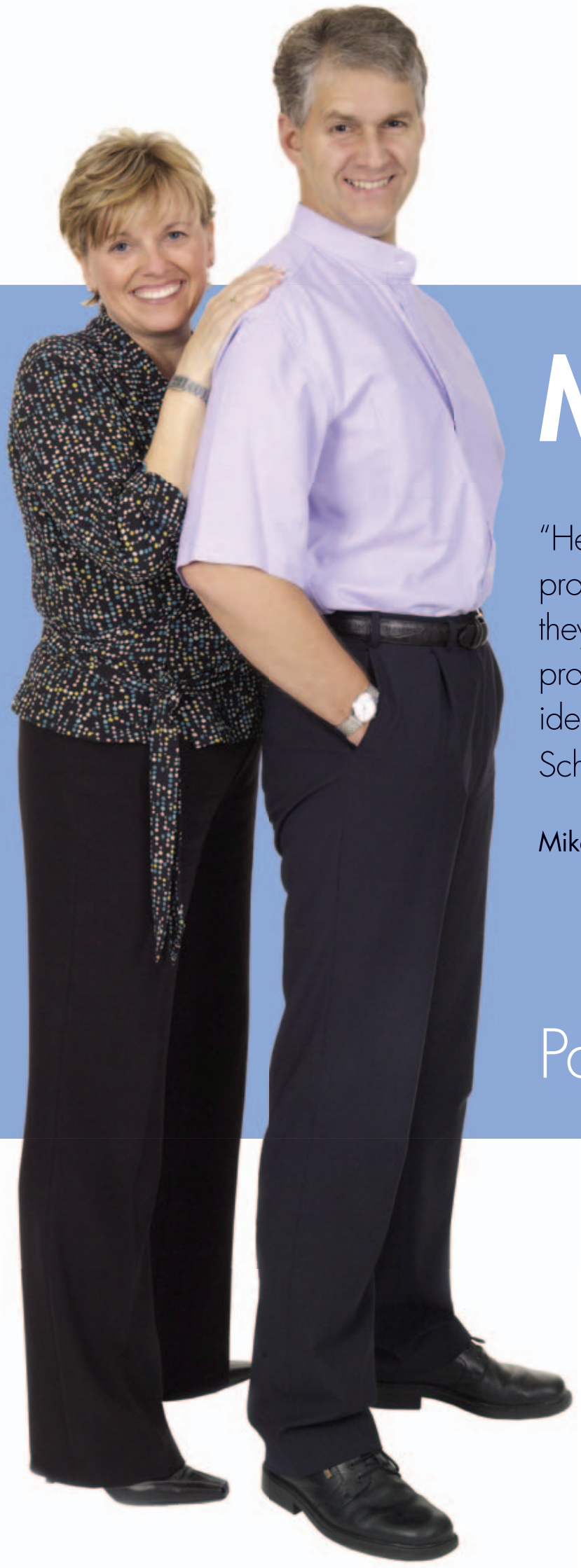

Me & Henry Schein

"Henry Schein Minerva's philosophy is to help practitioners maximise profitability by helping them run successful businesses. From the outset, they encouraged us to think about where we could improve productivity and efficiency, providing practical advice and marketing ideas based on our individual circumstances. Working with Henry Schein Minerva in this way has been nothing short of a revelation."

Mike & Helen - Briercliffe Road Dental Practice, Burnley

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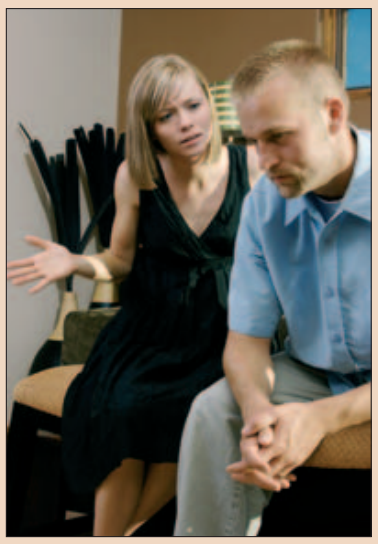
Log all complaints says DDU

The Dental Defence Union is advising dental professionals to log all complaints and ensure a system is set up to carry out proper investigations.

The Dental Defence Union (DDU) has issued its advice in the wake of the National Audit Office (NAO) report on complaints handling, which highlighted a 'lack of learning' from complaints in the health and social care sector.

Rupert Hoppenbrouwers, head of the DDU, said: 'In 2007, the DDU was asked to help with over 700 complaints by dental members. Some complaints were unjustified, others were the result of human error which led to an adverse outcome, and many were a consequence of a system failure such as not keeping a record of a treatment plan given to the patient. We entirely agree with the NAO's recommendation, and usually advise our dental members to use complaints as an opportunity to identify underlying system problems and seek to resolve them.'

He added: 'Patients and their representatives often say that their motivation in making a complaint is to find out what went wrong and that they would like an apology. Equally important, they seek assurances that steps have been put in place to stop the same thing happening again.'


Don't forget to log the complaints

The new NHS complaints procedure, planned for April 2009, will place greater emphasis on local resolution.

Those involved in responding to complaints will be expected to involve the complainant throughout the process, work within existing clinical governance procedures, and demonstrate any improvements which have resulted.

This is very similar to guidance already in existence from the DDU.

This guidance includes:

- Recording a complaint in writing and having it acknowledged by the designated complaints manager within three working days in primary care (two days in NHS bodies outside primary care).
- It can also be useful to offer the complainant a meeting to discuss the concerns raised.
- Investigations should look beyond human error in order to identify and eliminate risks that could lead to a recurrence. For more serious incidents, you may decide to hold a meeting to discuss the issues in greater detail where all staff can contribute. Ensure a record is kept of the meeting and agree a date to follow up any action points.
- Provide a full, detailed and positive response to a complainant within 10 working days of receipt in primary care (25 days outside primary care). This should ideally include an account of what happened, an apology where appropriate, and an explanation of any steps which have been put in place to prevent a repeat of the problem. If appropriate, you may also choose to waive or refund the fee, or offer remedial treatment free of charge, as a goodwill gesture. DT

Mouth Cancer Action Week

Campaign organisers of Mouth Cancer Action Week are urging dental practices to claim their free Blue Ribbon Badge Appeal kits to raise awareness of the disease.

The British Dental Health Foundation (BDHF) is holding its awareness week on 16-22 November.

Dr Nigel Carter, chief executive of the BDHF said: 'Action can be as simple as setting up a Blue Ribbon Badge Appeal kit on your premises, or taking a few moments to discuss mouth cancer with patients.

The kit is free, and by distributing badges we can help raise public consciousness of the disease.'

Five thousand people are diagnosed each year in the UK, and mouth cancer causes more deaths than both cervical cancer and testicular cancer combined. Yet one in five people remain unaware of the disease.

Dr Carter added: 'It is up to all of us as health professionals to act on the front line against this killer, and ordering a kit can be just the start.'

Early detection of mouth cancer can improve survival chances to more than 90 per cent - currently around 1,700 people die from the disease each year.

Easy-to-spot warning signs include mouth ulcers that do not heal within three weeks, red or white patches in the mouth and unusual swellings or lumps within the mouth or neck.

The BDHF claims that by sharing knowledge and awareness - which can be helped by giving all dental staff a blue ribbon badge to wear during Action Week - early detection chances can improve.

Dr Nigel Carter

Blue Ribbon Badge Kits include a free collection box and badges - which carry a suggested donation value of £1 each. There is no obligation on collections, and an Action week poster will be included.

To order your free kit, phone the Foundation on 0870 770 4000, email pr@dentalhealth.org, or visit the website *www.mouthcancer.org*. DT

Recruitment website launch

The Dental Schools Council has launched a recruitment website for people looking for clinical academic jobs in dental schools.

www.clinicalacademicjobs.org is a non-profit website which enables job seekers to search free of charge for current clinical academic, teaching and research jobs in undergraduate and postgraduate dental schools in the UK.

The aim of the website is to help schools recruit dental clinical academics, whilst acting as a career resource for the current and future academic workforce.

In addition, job seekers will have access to relevant organisations offering funding and training for clinical academic careers.

The website is managed in partnership by the Dental Schools Council and the Medical Schools Council. DT

Me & Henry Schein

"Sometimes people think that big companies aren't interested in NHS dental practices, my experience of Henry Schein Minerva is just the opposite. They have encouraged and supported us in many ways, providing an excellent staff training programme which has really helped develop our personnel. We now have an established facility that provides outstanding care for our patients, all made possible by the first class service we receive from Henry Schein Minerva."

Yemi Opaleye – Tetbury Dental Practice, Tetbury

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