

CONSULTATION ON THE FUTURE OF DENTAL SERVICES IN SCOTLAND

- From Jean Fleetwood (Highland) Lay Member of the Scottish Dental Practice Board
Notes from comments made by friends and neighbours.

- Individuals are experiencing difficulty, not only in finding an NHS Dental Practitioner, but, increasingly, even a private dentist. This situation is exacerbated in this vast remote and rural area of Scotland, but is also becoming apparent in urban areas.
- The service at present does not seem to be addressing the undeniable fact that Scotland's children have the worst teeth in Europe.
- The elderly are largely forgotten. In another decade the baby boomers will begin to be part of that age group, putting further demands on the system.
- Whilst Scotland trains around 120 dentists per year, which should be sufficient for our needs, this number is not retained, England being the main beneficiary. It has been suggested that dental students be trained on a 'cadetship' basis, an undertaking being required that they subsequently practice for a period of say 3/5 years, in Scotland.
- It will take some time before the effectiveness of doubling the "Golden Hellos" can be assessed.
- A promise has been given that free dental check ups for all will be available. In the same way that everyone has the right to a GP, everyone should have the right to General Dental services, and the 15 month registration rule be scrapped.
- There is a perception that the Salaried Service is second rate, and staffed by dentists who are less efficient. Nonetheless, if dentists are carefully chosen, and they submit GP17s etc (EDI) in the same way as other practitioners, they may have a valuable role to play. [or by whatever means is used in the future to check up on the work of GDPs]
- Young dentists are increasingly reluctant to view their career as within the NHS.
- They see the IOS payment system as degrading. B) As patients become increasingly desperate to find an NHS dentist they may vent their anger on the dentist who then feels threatened and less inclined to treat any more NHS patients.
- The move to train Therapists to carry out routine dental work under the supervision of a qualified GDP, could be very helpful especially within larger practices.
- Retention of Therapists, may be an issue, a real concern being that Therapists may be tempted away from remote and rural locations to private practices in the south, or to England. Again there is the suggestion that some kind of 'cadetship' be considered as an aid to retention.
- The implications of the imminent departure of the Dental Public Health Consultant from Highland Health Board remain to be seen. The post lay vacant for a considerable length of time before being filled *a few years ago*.
- Two of the three hospital Consultants (OMFS and Orthodontist) are due to retire in a couple of years. Working time directives, and other pressures, indicate that these roles might not be filled in the same way. One could envisage that it might be tempting 'cover' from Aberdeen. It is suggested that to do so would in fact undermine the basis on which dental care in its entirety, is provided in Highland.
- It could be argued that Highland already does not receive the service it is due. Restorative Dentistry is provided on a visiting basis, with **advice only** given. **No treatment** whatsoever is provided. Practitioners may not be sufficiently skilled.
- The treatment facilities at Raigmore Hospital have been condemned in the 2002 Infection Cross Control Audit.
- It would just not be reasonable or acceptable to expect individuals from Uig or Achiltibuie with the constraints of public transport, to have to travel to Aberdeen. Managed Clinical Networks have their place to cover difficult situations as they exist. MCNs, it is argued, *should not be thought of as a panacea for all ills. Furthermore additional staff and funding may be required in order that the Clinical Networks are managed properly.*
- As the opportunity for public representation on this consultation may be limited, it is hoped this contribution may be of assistance.

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23/1/04

> Scottish Dental Reference Service, or

> by whatever means this is done in the future), as work carried out by

> NHS GDPs.

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> Yours sincerely,

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> Mrs Jean Fleetwood

> 25th March 2004

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