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From: Dr Don Macleod [mailto:drmmacleod@blueyonder.co.uk]
Sent: 23 March 2004 10:43
To: eric.gray@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
Subject: Modernising Dental services Scotland

28 RAVELRIG GAIT
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Dear Mr Gray

I have been working as a mainly NHS dentist in Bathgate, West Lothian, for the past eighteen years and, slowly but surely, even though the practice is busy, I am gradually going bankrupt.

Overheads in the last five years have rocketed, especially with staff wages and new added red tape. Conversely, my income has been dropping, partly due to the fact that we all slow down as we get older, and partly due to the fact that, because of my preventive stance, and my increasing reluctance to "drill and fill", I am heavily penalised by the method of payment endorsed by the NHS..i.e... don't get paid to advise/monitor / preventively treat ,but leave till damage occurs and get paid to correct it.

This "cart before the horse" approach to NHS dentistry is totally the wrong approach. I pay a full time hygienist and nurse to preventively fissure seal children's molars, and to spend time teaching flossing and proper oral care to children and parents alike. One result of this is that most of my teenage patients have no filling or very few (certainly far below the national Scottish average)

This is how dentistry should be but the result of this is :-

- a) I have subsidised the cost of prevention for the last eighteen years. (the capitation and continuing care does not nearly cover the overhead cost) I will not compromise the oral health of my patients so I struggle on.
- b) Most of my patients now need very few fills/ crowns/ root treatments, so I don't get paid. The sad truth of the situation is that if I didn't bother years ago to preventively treat my younger patients, I would have plenty work, drilling and filling, getting paid for NEGLECT...an unbelievable situation.

The solution is so simple and just plain good fashioned common sense.. we should be properly paid to prevent problems occurring, not get paid to wait till problems arise. !!!

I would advocate full time hygienists in every school, instructing at primary in proper oral hygiene techniques, including flossing and fissure sealant use. Also we as dentists should be paid primarily for prevention, not drilling and filling. This could be gradually introduced throughout Scotland and although the cost of hygienists would be high initially, the saving in the future would be vast and we would be out of the drill and fill current mentality.

Result.. happy children ... far less toothache.. happy parents.. happy dentists..happy government !!

Finally, as an indication of what we are up against I will give this example.. We get paid under £10 to take a child's tooth out, irrespective of how long this takes. A vet gets paid ten times this to take a tooth out of a dog !!!

Yours sincerely

Don R M Macleod

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