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Changing times...



The role of the dental nurse is changing, something that I am sure you have heard many times before. I certainly have, during my time since joining the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN) in late 2008. Since then, it seems the whole industry is going through constant change, with many people scratching their heads and thinking ‘What is all this about—why can’t they leave us alone to get on with the job?’. Whether it be perceived heavy handedness from the regulator, or a lack of communication to explain the reasons for the need to change (something I have been guilty of when pushing through developments at NEBDN), my own personal view is that things are changing for the better.

You might think ‘Hang on a minute! Since 2008, NEBDN has become more bureaucratic, more complex and even less visible’. The truth is that we, as an organisation, have made massive leaps, investing many thousands of pounds to remain fit for purpose in this regulated environment. Our replacement of the National Certificate, which was an extremely well respected qualification, is often quoted as the ‘gold standard’ in dental nurse education. The development of Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs) as the practical element of this qualification is the largest exam of its type in Europe. And we have not stopped there. Over the last few OSCEs, we have been piloting and refining an electronic marking system, which will make the exams more efficient to administer and improve the analysis and delivery of results. All of this was achieved at a time when we were unsure of our position as a provider of a registerable qualification. Was the GDC unreasonable to put us through such a drawn out process to gain sufficiency in their eyes? I do not think so. If anything, they helped us to shape an even more professional and proactive NEBDN.

So, where do we go from here? Regular readers of *Dental Nursing* will have noticed a few articles detailing a recent research survey we undertook to understand the wants and needs of dental nurses. The results showed that over 46% of those surveyed are planning to gain further qualifications. More exploration of the market will enable us to introduce new, research-informed qualifications that will meet the needs of dental nurses in the 21st century. As we work to improve the current suite of post-registration awards we offer, we continue to investigate how the better use of technology will make these examinations more accessible. With the launch of a structured communications strategy that will keep NEBDN in the minds of everyone in the dental team, we are well positioned to build on the reputation we have established as the leading provider of dental nurse qualifications in the United Kingdom.

In this issue, Rachel Hughes talks about how obtaining a qualification in oral health education has enabled her to develop her own nurse-led clinic. Kathryn Marshall comments on the NHS England publication *Improving Dental Care and Oral Health – A Call to Action*. Shilla Talati gives advice on how to effectively manage your time in the dental practice, while John Fowler discusses the importance of reflection. Kerry Kemp and colleagues examine moving and handling within the dental practice and Richard Griffith explains how the *Mental Capacity Act 2005* should be applied by dental care professionals. Jena Payne analyses the effects of xylitol as an antifungal treatment, and Ama Johal and Priya Haria discuss the management of obstructive sleep apnoea/hypopnea syndrome.

Phil Hughes, Chief Executive, NEBDN