

Newsletter

Dental Council
An Comhairle Fiaclóireachta

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Editor's Welcome

Welcome to the first issue of our newsletter designed to keep all our registrants and the general public informed and up to date on what is happening at the Dental Council. This issue contains interesting articles, statistics and updates such as the dissolution of the Postgraduate and Medical Dental Board (PGM&DB), Continuing Professional Development (CPD), the establishment of the new class of Clinical Dental Technicians (CDTs) and extended duties for dental hygienists. It illustrates the many and varied issues that the Dental Council embraces as part of its mandate to promote high standards of professional education and training while protecting the interests of the general public.



I am confident that you will find this newsletter helpful and informative and I would encourage you to write to me with any questions you would like answered in the next edition.

My email address is
joannefulham@dentalcouncil.ie

Message from the President



Dr Martin Holohan

The general concern of the Dental Council is to promote high standards of professional education and conduct among dentists and to regulate the dental and allied professions in a fair and just manner.

Today a more democratic form of regulation is emerging and I and my fellow Council Members are acutely aware that a healthcare regulatory body of the twenty-first century should be a partnership of dental professionals and the public.

Dentistry and clinical standards are evolving constantly as are public expectations. To protect the public and enjoy the confidence of patients, the professions have to embrace change and keep abreast of developments. We, as a Dental Council, are committed to playing a leadership role in the legislative process with respect to issues defining the practice of dentistry. Our approach will be collaborative and balanced, striving for more involvement from the professions while reinforcing the value of responsible regulation in the public interest. The present Dental Council is most fortunate to have a group of sincere dedicated people working in a voluntary capacity as a cohesive team, focusing on making good decisions in favour of the Dental Council's broad interests of effective, fair and just regulation of the professions.

The Dental Council is fully committed to our four core principles of professionalism, respect, integrity and transparency. These principles are the very essence of what a Regulatory Body charged with protecting the public interest, should be expected to achieve.

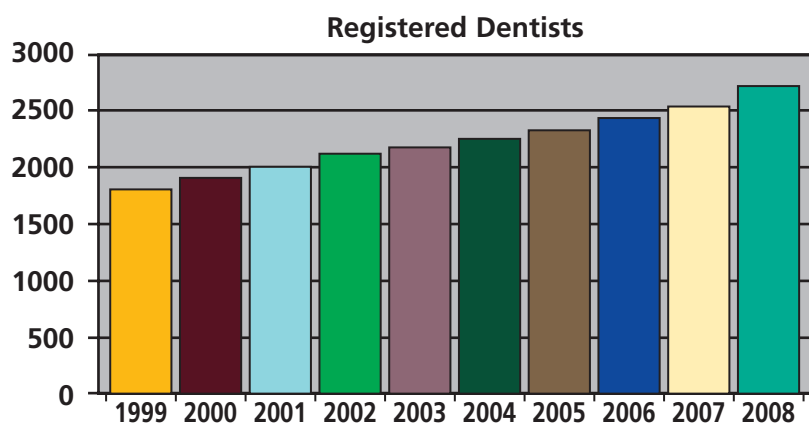
The workload of the Council has increased enormously over the years. Giving guidance to the public, dealing with registrants, handling complex registration issues, liaising with Government departments, organising examinations and supporting Council and its committees made an inordinate demand on a small team. In 2008 we had to recruit additional staff. I welcome Joanne Fulham and Vivienne Kelly to the team joining Angela McNulty and Jamie Lee Ferguson on our administrative staff. On the downside Tom Farren who has been the Chief Officer/Registrar since the establishment of the Council in 1985 has indicated his intention to resign and will vacate his post before the end of 2009.

Report from the Registrar

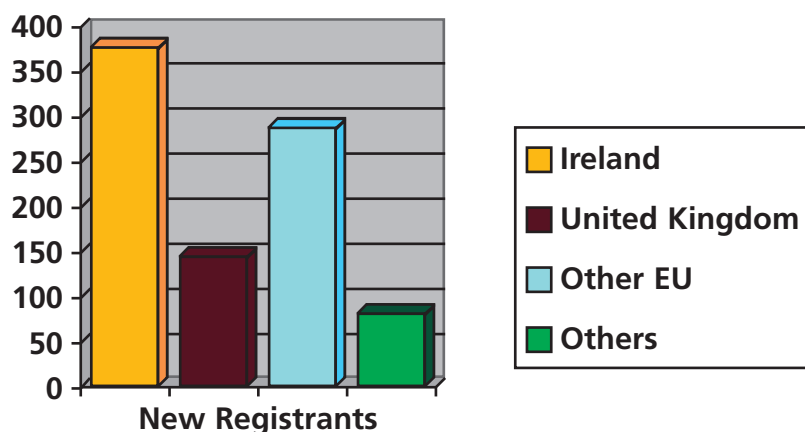
Tom Farren



The **Register of Dentists** continues to grow and at the end of 2008 there were 2,675 dentists registered (1,614 are male and 1,061 are female). The per annum growth over the past decade is shown on the chart below:



The source of new Registrants between 2004 and 2008 is shown on the chart below:



The **Register of Dental Specialists** was established in 2000 containing divisions in respect of orthodontics and oral surgery. At present there are 117 orthodontists and 35 oral surgeons registered. The **Register of Dental Hygienists** was established in 1991 currently has 367 registrants. The **Register of Clinical Dental Technicians** holds 11 names and the voluntary **Register of Dental Nurses** has 550 registrants.

It is the intention of the Council to publish the Register of Dentists, the Register of Dental Specialists and the Register of Clinical Dental Technicians on our website later this year. You should consider your current registered address and write to the Council should you wish to change it. Some registrants are registered at a private address and may wish to change to a practice address before the registers go online.



Europe Matters

Dr Barney Murphy

Vice-President

The Council has joined the Conference of Orders and Assimilated Bodies of Dental Regulators in Europe (CODE). CODE is an association registered under French Law. Its headquarters and permanent secretariat is at the office of the French Competent Authority, Conseil National de l'Ordre des Chirugiens Dentistes in Paris. It is also represented in Brussels.

The objectives of CODE are to:

- Promote quality of oral health
- Promote patient safety
- Harmonise ethical rules
- Exchange views and information on matters of common interest
- Provide advice to decision makers in relation to the implementation of EU Directives that impact on dentistry.

Ireland will assume the Presidency of CODE in August 2009. For further information about CODE please visit their website: www.code-europe.eu



Education and Training in the Council

Dr Christine McCreary

Chair of the Education and Training Committee

On 31 December 2008, the Postgraduate Medical and Dental Board (PGM&DB) was dissolved and its functions transferred to the Health Service Executive (HSE). At present an interim committee established by the HSE is examining how best these functions can be discharged in the future. Council has expressed a willingness to assume responsibility for Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and it is likely that it will be given that remit.

Under promised new legislation (the new Dentists Act) CPD will become mandatory for dentists. The successful implementation of CPD will demonstrate the commitment of all dentists to achieving the highest possible standards.

It is anticipated that CPD will be delivered over a five year cycle with both verifiable and non-verifiable components.

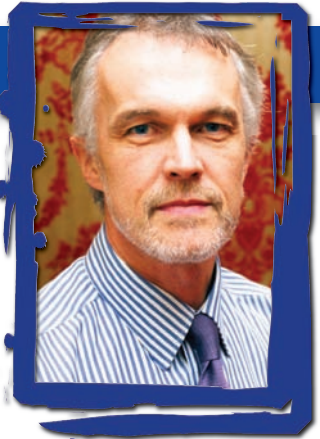
The Council has a legal obligation to provide a mechanism for dentists who have non-EEA training to qualify for registration in Ireland. Council established a special examination, held annually, in order to discharge this obligation. Arrangements are now underway for this year's Council examinations. Part I took place in April 2009 and Part II was held in Cork in June 2009.

We regularly have up to 80 applicants for this examination.

Auxiliary Dental Workers

Dr Eamon Croke

Chair of the Auxiliary Dental Workers Committee



In 2008 the Minister for Health and Children gave her consent to the establishment of clinical dental technicians (CDTs) as a new category of dental worker. This was a just reward for progressive dental technicians who sought career advancement and who, at considerable cost, accessed training outside the State. 11 CDT's are now registered with the Council all holding diplomas as clinical dental technicians awarded by the Royal College of Surgeons of England. The Council is excited about this development and it is confident that the new grade will be welcomed by the public and the dental profession.

Presentation of Certificates of Registration as Clinical Dental Technicians by the President of the Council, Dr Martin Holohan and the Chair of the Auxilliary Committee, Dr Eamon Croke. Recipients are Garrett McEnri, Patrick Lynch, Maurice Petherick and Colum Sower.

The Committee would like to see other statutory changes including mandatory registration of dental nurses and dental technicians and mandatory Continuing Professional Development for all auxiliary dental workers. Currently it is looking at the desirability of introducing an expanded duty dental nurse and independent dental hygienists.



Dental Nurse Training



Helen Phipps

Dental Nurse Representative on the Auxiliary Dental Workers Committee

Dental Nurse training in Ireland is available through the full-time Diploma in Dental Nursing programme provided by the Dublin Dental School and Hospital and the National Dental Nurse Training programme developed and delivered by the Cork and Dublin Dental Schools to a number of centres throughout the State.

The Dublin Dental School and Hospital course is offered through the CAO to a maximum of 25 applicants each year.

The National Dental Nurse Training Programme is available to persons who work in a dental practice. The theoretical knowledge provided by the dental school is augmented by the practical training and experience gained in the dental practice. The programme is available in Dublin, Cork, Galway, Carlow, Tralee, Waterford and Limerick. A total of 423 dental nurses have graduated since the programme commenced in 2004. 134 persons were offered positions on the course in 2009.

DIPLOMA IN DENTAL NURSING – Class 2008 Graduates



Back row (L to R): Ms Monica Purcell, Ms Emma Poynton, Ms Catherine Brennan, Ms Jennifer Collinge, Ms Clodagh French, Ms Eileen Flynn, Ms Elaine Keavney, Ms Denise Brennan, Ms Sarah Coffey, Ms Erin McGauley and Ms Claire O'Connor.

At back: Dr Eamon Croke (Chair of the Auxiliary Dental Workers Committee).

The Future for Dental Hygienists

Eileen McEvoy

**Dental Hygienist Representative on the
Auxiliary Dental Workers Committee**



The Council, with the consent of the Minister for Health and Children, has approved additional duties for dental hygienists. Members of the grade who have completed a relevant training programme are permitted to administer ID block anaesthesia, re-fit crowns with temporary cement and place temporary dressings when crowns and fillings are displaced by the hygienist in the course of treatment.

The Competition Authority in its report on dentistry recommended that dental hygienists with appropriate training should be permitted to work independently of a dentist. This recommendation would need a change of legislation as under the current Act dental hygienists have to be supervised by a registered dentist. In turn dental hygienists would require further education and training for independent practice.

Access to dental care is not uniformly available to all citizens in this country. The elderly, the sick and the institutionalised are less likely to receive dental care than the population in general.

Older people are retaining their teeth more and more. However without routine dental care the advantage of tooth retention can be lost. Achieving and maintaining good oral hygiene can be difficult for these categories of patients. Dental hygienists could play a huge role in this area and bring some comfort to persons that society tends to forget. By having direct access dental hygienists could provide a service to patients whose opportunities for oral healthcare might otherwise be limited.

Fitness to Practise



Dr Terry Farrelly

Chair of the Fitness to Practise Committee

Points to Remember

1. All radiographs taken in the practice of dentistry must be clinically justified and must be recorded in the patient's record.
2. Dental nurses who have completed a Dental Council approved course in radiation protection and technique may take radiographs in the practice of dentistry under the supervision of a dentist and provided they are registered in the Register of Dental Nurses maintained by the Council.
3. Dental Hygienists must be supervised in their work by a registered dentist. A dentist must first examine the patient and indicate to the dental hygienist the course of treatment to be provided.
4. Dental nurses are **not** permitted to carry out intra oral duties.

The Fitness to Practise Committee primarily deals with complaints from the public and in the development and communication of ethical guidelines. A new Code of Conduct pertaining to Public Relations and Communications was published and circulated to all dentists in July 2008. A copy can be found on our website www.dentalcouncil.ie

The following is an outline of type and number of complaints under current consideration by the Committee:

Unsatisfactory treatment	39
Attitude/Rudeness	8
Fees	5
Consent	4
Over prescription	1
Inappropriate Medication	1
Indecent Assault	1
Misrepresentation	1
Substance Abuse	1
Failure to treat	2
Failure to pay staff	2
Damage to dentition	3
Fraudulent claims	2
Emergency Service	1
Refusal to treat	2

Unfortunately the volume of complaints is rising and this is extremely disappointing. Poor communication is a major contributor to complaints. A willingness on the practitioner's part to engage with the complainant with a view to reaching an amicable settlement would reduce the number of complaints coming to the Committee and would avoid a lot of stress for both dentist and patient alike.

The Committee has embarked on a review of the Council Code of Ethics and hope to have an updated code finalised before the end of 2009.

Since its appointment in 2005 the current Fitness to Practise Committee has recommended the erasure of the name of one practitioner from the Register of Dentists and the attachment of conditions to the continued registration of two other practitioners.