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Introduction

A College of Dentistry – Composite to Amalgam?

In January 2006, the Board of the Faculty of Dental Surgery (FDS) approved a proposal to merge with the Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK) (FGDP[UK]) to form a College of Dentistry within the Royal College of Surgeons of England. On 24 February 2006, the Board of the FGDP(UK) also gave their approval to this development. **So, what does this mean for dental care professionals (DCPs)?**

The answer is probably not very much in the short term. It seems probable that there will be three faculty's within the new College: a faculty for dentists working in primary care (general dentists), one for dentists working in secondary care (specialist dentists), and one for DCPs. The first step in the process will be the amalgamation of the membership qualifications of each faculty (the MFGDP[UK] and MFDS) into one common examination leading to a single qualification, which can be taken by all dentists irrespective of whether they work in primary or secondary care.

In the bigger world of education for health professionals, increasing emphasis is being placed on **transferable credits for existing knowledge and skills**, as well as the development of a 'skills escalator'. In the long term, if the skills escalator and the principles of transferable credits for completed training are extended to all members of the dental team, then it will be far easier for individuals to develop their careers as they gain credits. It is easy to see how this system could, for example, enable a dental nurse, who gains credits for accumulated knowledge and skills, to become a **dental hygienist**, then go on to **become a general dentist** and finally a **specialist in periodontics**.

Returning to the present, one initial step in the process of developing the careers of DCPs is the requirement to take part in **lifelong learning**. To assist in the process, the scenario-based articles in this issue of *Team in Practice* concentrate on one aspect of day-to-day procedures within the dental practice – **cross-infection control**. Risks are run and blood is shed!

Elsewhere, *The Probe's* **Practice Manager of the Year** describes a phenomenal 2005 for both herself and her practice, and the FGDP(UK) introduces its **new DCP Development Officer**, Sally White. I hope that you enjoy all the articles in this issue and we would welcome any comments or feedback. Please contact the editorial team (keaton@rcseng.ac.uk or cworker@rcseng.ac.uk).

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