Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK)

Briefing: House of Lords debate on dental implants and periodontal checks

Grand Committee, 23 July 2014

Post-implant periodontal assessment is essential

The FGDP(UK) believes that it is essential for patients to receive appropriate periodontal checks following dental implant surgery. This is considered a mandatory component of any training that adheres to the FGDP(UK)’s Training Standards in Implant Dentistry, and as is expected by the General Dental Council (GDC). Dentists must continue to refer to the FGDP(UK)’s Training standards in implant dentistry when choosing an appropriate training programme, as is required by the GDC.

The FGDP(UK) has not seen evidence of widespread issues concerning lack of follow-up and maintenance of patients with dental implants. Furthermore, any dentist placing implants has a professional responsibility to ensure that the patient is discharged to a general dental practitioner (GDP) who is competent to monitor implant health. Expanded guidance on delegation of periodontal monitoring and maintenance is among the issues being considered as part of the 2014 revision of the FGDP(UK)’s Training standards in implant dentistry, due to take place shortly.

Competency of the GDP in peri-implant assessment

All GDPs have a duty of care to carry out an assessment of the health of the peri-implant tissue, and to recognise peri-implantitis and other complications associated with the placement of the implant, to accepted standards. Any GDP for whom the assessment of implant health is out with their level of competency must make arrangements to either complete additional training or refer the patient to a GDP with the necessary competencies. In addition, the FGDP(UK) supports working with the Heads of the Dental Schools and the relevant bodies to ensure that the core undergraduate curricula within dentistry includes the teaching of peri-implant assessment and maintenance.

FGDP(UK) and implant dentistry

The FGDP(UK) has offered a successful and highly regarded two-year diploma course in implant dentistry since 2002. It is currently in its 15th cohort. The course was subject to inspection by the...
General Dental Council (GDC) in 2005, and subsequently became the first diploma in implant dentistry to be registerable with the GDC as an additional qualification. The GDC and others have referred to the course as representing the ‘gold standard’ in training for implant dentistry.

**FGDP(UK)’s implant training standards**

In 2005, the FGDP(UK) published ‘Training Standards in Implant Dentistry’ ([See http://tinyurl.com/implanttrainingstandards](http://tinyurl.com/implanttrainingstandards)), which is formally acknowledged by the GDC as the authoritative guide to the level of training required before a practitioner can carry out implant treatment in practice. These standards were revised in 2008 and in 2012, and will be reviewed again before the end of 2014.

The GDC states that it ‘expects education providers and dentists who wish to practice implant dentistry to refer to these standards as the authoritative source of training standards for implant dentistry in the UK’. It also states that the GDC ‘will refer to the standards when assessing patient complaints against dentists who, allegedly, practise implant dentistry beyond the limits of their competence’.

**Informed consent and treatment outcomes**

When carried out by a practitioner that is appropriately trained and who has demonstrated the necessary competencies though structured and accredited assessment, the placing of dental implants is considered to be a predictable treatment that offers positive long-term outcomes for patients.

The FGDP(UK) has expressed concern at the general rise in Fitness to Practice cases at the GDC, including an increase in those associated with implant treatment. It appears to be the case that many complaints arising from implant dentistry involve issues with gaining appropriate consent.

The FGDP(UK)’s implant diploma includes informed consent as a core component of both teaching and via assessment of an assignment. The issue of appropriate informed consent will also be considered in detail as part of the 2014 revision of the Training standards in Implant Dentistry.

**Issues and concerns**

The FGDP(UK) has voiced concerns around the variability in training, education and continuing professional development (CPD) across all aspects of dentistry, including implant dentistry. We continue to urge the GDC to reconsider the decision to remove the ability to register additional qualifications with the regulator, including the FGDP(UK)’s Diploma in Implant Dentistry.
The growing concern with the rise in Fitness to Practice cases at the GDC has led the FGDP(UK) to examine the need for additional and/or revised standards. We believe that a collaborative approach to standard setting from all stakeholders is both timely and necessary.

It is essential that any dentist who is considering training in implant dentistry carefully considers the content, aims and outcomes of any course against the standards set out in the FGDP(UK)’s training standards. We believe that the publication of the revised standards later in 2014 will provide an opportunity for the GDC and other stakeholders to re-emphasise to prospective and existing implant dentists the importance of ensuring compliance across a range of expected competencies.

About the FGDP(UK)

The Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK) is based at The Royal College of Surgeons of England. We are the largest of the UK dental faculties and provide a national voice for 4700 fellows and members.

Around 95% of dental care in the UK is provided in the primary dental care setting. The FGDP(UK) improves the standard of primary care dentistry delivered to patients through standard setting, postgraduate training and assessment, publications, policy development, and research. The FGDP(UK) offers CPD and training opportunities for all dental professionals registered with the GDC.

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