

New dental regulation is waste of money: dentists

16th November 2010

From April next year all dentists will be required to register with the 'super-regulator' the Care Quality Commission alongside hospitals and GPs.

The aim is to ensure all are maintaining proper treatment standards, that services are provided in clean facilities and that are accountable for the work they carry out.

However this work is already done by the General Dental Council for over 50 years and requiring dentists to register with the CQC is 'duplicatory and wasteful', the letter said.

More than 350 dentists have signed the letter saying that the plan will be costly and time-consuming for both dentists and the government.

Quentin Skinner, Chairman of DPAS Dental Plans, which administers dental insurance plans for practices and is a signatory on the letter said the CQC registration was 'a classic example of a top down bureaucratic approach'.

The letter signed more than 350 general dental practitioners, said: "As the Coalition Government is seeking to make significant cuts without damaging front line services, may we suggest that one of the first places it should look is at the duplicatory and wasteful plans it has for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) to regulate dental professionals.

"The truth is that this new regime will benefit nobody, and impose significant costs upon both primary dental-care services and the Government.

"If the Government is genuinely looking to make cost savings with minimal impact on frontline services, then this proposed new regime is, we suggest, ripe for reconsideration."

Last week the British Dental Association, which represents dentists, said excessive administration and rising costs are hitting morale in the profession.

The BDA also fears that the CQC registration requirement will only add to the red tape faced by dental practices and encourage more practitioners to seek early retirement.

John Milne, Chairman of the BDA's General Dental Practice Committee, said: "While supporting measures to ensure the safety and quality of dental services for patients, the BDA believes that the way the CQC's onerous registration requirements is being implemented is disproportionate, inadequately tailored to dentistry and duplicates many existing requirements.

"It represents just more red tape when dentists should be concentrating on patient care."

A Department of Health spokesman said: "The proposal to register primary dental care providers with the CQC was consulted on by the previous administration in March 2008 and March 2009. It was supported by a strong majority of those who responded, including the BDA and the General Dental Council (GDC).

"Coalition Ministers have made clear their expectation that regulation should be proportionate and not overly burdensome. Currently the General Dental Council only regulates individual dental professionals, whereas the CQC will regulate the organisation providing the service as a whole.

"A practice's management, non-clinical staff, cleanliness, and equipment are as important to protect patient safety as the clinical skills of dentists, and should also be quality assured. CQC registration will also ensure that all private practices providing clinical treatments are accountable for the quality of the services they provide."