

General practitioners filling the gap left by inadequate dental services, says doctor

A shortage of NHS dentists means that general practitioners (GPs) have been left to do dentists' work without adequate remuneration, argues a doctor in a letter in this week's BMJ.

An increasing number of patients are visiting GP surgeries with what are fundamentally dental problems, writes Alastair Bint from St Luke's Surgery in Guilford, UK.

Dr Bint recorded a 1600% rise in the number of dental related consultations over the last 10 years in his own practice of over 10 000 registered patients.

Recent reports in the press have highlighted the continuing problem of patients being unable to register with an NHS dentist, or to see to a dentist out of basic working hours.

Despite the Minister of State for Health Services, Ben Bradshaw, advising people who cannot get dental treatment to go to their GP or primary care trust, there is no provision in the NHS contract for GPs to be compensated for dental work, he writes.

"Once again...GPs are left to pick up work that should be performed by other professionals without adequate remuneration", he concludes.

Source: British Medical Journal

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