

Beat the rush with locums

LUKE ARNOLD looks at how using locums can help NHS practices to keep on top of their UDA targets, and why it's important not to recruit at the last minute...

FOR dental practices with an NHS contract, there is little wiggle room in terms of performance. Indeed, unlike private practices, which are able to set their own individual targets and financial objectives, NHS practices must perform no less than 96 per cent of its contracted units of dental activity (UDA) by the end of the financial year. Failure to do so can result in NHS England (NHSE) issuing a breach notice to the practice.

Depending on the circumstances of the breach and the severity and frequency of underperformance, NHSE may choose to impose a lower UDA volume or price, or in serious cases withdraw the contract completely. This can have an impact on profitability, and could even lead to either closure or revision of the practice type. In instances where underperformance occurs during a practice sale, then the offer may be withdrawn from the buyer – if performance is revealed before the heads of terms are agreed – or the transaction is aborted mid-sale. Buyers will always look to mitigate any possible risk – not to mention that banks are less likely to lend against practices that are underperforming.

Despite these risks, it is not uncommon for practices to fall behind schedule – at Dental Elite we see it happen time and

time again. It usually occurs in the first quarter following a mad dash in the run up to the end of the financial year, when there is less urgency to go full throttle. It's likely that relief and exhaustion play a part in the temporary lull too, if the clinical team were working flat out in the final quarter to make sure the targets were met.

It is here, in the earlier stages of the financial year, that NHS practices can very quickly fall into the trap of underperformance, because if they haven't performed at least 30 per cent of their contracted UDAs by the half-way point in the year, then they're already considered to be behind. It is for this reason that practices should always endeavour to stay ahead of the game with their targets and do all they can to keep on schedule. Besides, it's far less stressful than scrambling to make up the numbers towards the end of the year, which often means more hours in the surgery and bringing in locum staff to deal with the extra workload.

Because of that, locums tend to be harder to come by towards the end of the financial year, especially the top-tier talent, which can get snapped up quite early on. Due to supply and demand, locums are also in a better position to negotiate a higher UDA price, meaning practices



could be out of pocket if their asking price is higher than the actual UDA value. Luckily, this is a quandary that can be easily resolved simply by recruiting locums earlier on in the year.

Now especially is a good time to take on a locum, as not only is the size of the talent pool much larger to choose from – helping ensure a suitable candidate can be found with greater ease and less time pressure – it will also mean that UDA targets will be on the right trajectory for completion. To give practices the best chance of finding a quality locum dentist, Dental Elite offers an extensive recruitment service, in which it will carry out all aspects of the process, including a comprehensive search of potential candidates. The team uses a range of techniques to put together a shortlist, and has an extensive network of contacts that includes experienced and reliable locum dentists from all over the country. Together, with an unrivalled knowledge of the sector and the latest

trends, Dental Elite is the ideal partner for locum recruitment.

If you have an NHS contract and you're looking to avoid possible UDA underperformance, be sure to consider steps that could help you to get on track early on and keep ahead of the game. As long as you plan and prepare correctly, you should not only be able to maximise your chances of meeting your UDA target, but ensure that you do so early, thus avoiding the last minute rush.

www.dentalelite.co.uk

About the author

Luke Arnold joined the team at Dental Elite in 2011. He is currently the Director of Recruitment Services for the company.



Occlusal deprogramming at the BACD

RESTORATIVE and aesthetic dentistry expert, Dr Ken Harris, is delighted to be presenting at this year's British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (BACD) Annual Conference. He will be joining an exceptional line-up of world-class speakers, who will be providing their professional insights on a wide variety of topics. Dr Harris' hands-on lecture, entitled "The Kois Occlusal De-Programmer", will present a simplified approach to accurately recording Centric Relation (CR) and a valuable adjunct when completing occlusal equilibration.

"Despite the fact that there are numerous techniques described in the literature," says Dr Harris, "for many clinicians, recording Centric Relation (CR) still remains a daunting prospect, and often proves difficult to achieve in practice. Once you can confidently locate and record CR, then the whole world of occlusion opens up, but for too many practitioners CR remains the elephant in the room.

"The problem today – as it was when I was student – is that occlusion is not really taught at undergraduate level in the UK. Consequently, the entire subject remains clouded in mystery. Most references to occlusion come with dire warnings about the consequences of 'dabbling' in a complex subject that is far too challenging for General Dental Practitioners (GDPs) to get involved with.

My personal view is that some university tutors do not really understand occlusion and so, to hide their shortcomings they

warn us off the subject.

"As our patients retain their teeth for longer, there is a growing demand for GDPs to be able to deliver complex restorative treatment. Yet, dental hospitals are unwilling or unable to accept referrals for these procedures, which begs the question: who will treat these cases in the future? I suspect it will probably fall to GDPs to deal with the issue.

So, if we are going to have to deliver complex reconstructive dentistry for our patients, then we need to be secure in the knowledge that we can trust our CR positioning before we begin treatment."

As one of only two Accredited Fellows of the BACD, Dr Harris acts as a tutor and examiner for the BACD Accreditation process. He was the first UK graduate of the Kois Center in Seattle, USA, where he now mentors, and despite being a full time practitioner, Dr Harris maintains a busy teaching schedule both nationally and internationally. He is ideally placed to offer his expertise to delegates at the BACD Annual Conference.

Dr Harris explains: "Occlusion is an overwhelmingly practical subject that cannot really be learned from discussing the theory alone. As the occlusion learning curve appears too steep, many practitioners avoid taking the first step into this subject. Like all other journeys, the first step is always the most difficult, but my presentation at the BACD Annual Conference aims to make the first step

into CR recording easy.

"In advance of the session, delegates will be instructed how to fabricate and wear their own Kois Occlusal De-Programmer device. They will arrive on the day with their own occlusal systems fully 'deprogrammed', thereby allowing a real-time record of CR to be undertaken with delegates working upon each other during the workshop.

"I aim to eliminate any 'occlusion confusion', simplifying the entire process so that delegates can put the theory into practice right away, and be able to help solve their patients' complex restorative problems right from the get-go. I hope delegates realise that you don't need to be on the Specialist Register to be able to confidently record CR every time.

"With a rapidly aging population, there is so much complex dentistry waiting to be carried out. I encourage clinicians to attend my session if they want to reignite their passion for restorative dentistry and differentiate themselves from other dentists in their area. Delegates can safeguard their professional future by providing complex treatment plans for their patients. It's a no-brainer!"

Reflecting on the BACD and the Annual Conference, Dr Harris adds: "As a founding member of the Academy, I have been thankful to see how it has developed over the years. I am particularly proud of the BACD's inclusive membership and would encourage all dental professionals to become part of this dynamic organisation.

"The BACD Annual Conference has a well-deserved reputation as one of the industry's most welcoming events. Dental professionals have the opportunity to mingle with enthusiastic colleagues who share an upbeat, can-do attitude that flies in the face of so many other dental conferences, where the overlying theme is often doom and gloom for the future. I recommend everyone to come to the Annual Conference and rekindle their passion for dentistry. The full-day lecture presented by Dr John Kois is worth the ticket price alone, so if you are serious about your profession, you'd be daft to miss it."

The BACD Fifteenth Annual Conference 2018: 'The Functional Smile: Start With Why...' 8-10 November 2018, Millennium Gloucester Hotel Kensington, London. www.bacd.com



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