

# PRESS RELEASE



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## AUDITS ARE ESSENTIAL, WARNS MDDUS.

Dentists are being given timely advice at the start of a New Year that they must comply with guidelines on clinical audit activity in order to avoid sanctions from the General Dental Council, warns the Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland (MDDUS).

The UK-wide medical defence organisation points out that amidst the furore surrounding issues such as local decontamination units and GP17 treatment form submission time-limits, it is all too easy for less pressing aspects of practice management to be overlooked.

Doug Hamilton, dental adviser with MDDUS, says: "A case in point is clinical audit activity which, to the unwary practitioner, can appear to be tiresome, pointless or even optional.

"It might therefore be surprising to some GDP's that audit - and its new cousin significant event analysis - form an essential component of clinical governance.

"As such, it is an activity which is required of NHS practitioners by law and would be expected of all dentists by the GDC."

The effect of amendment to NHS (GDS) regulations north and south of the border is that, every 3 years, 15 hours of "*activities which involve the systematic and critical analysis of the quality of dental care*" must be completed.

MDDUS stresses that this means that NHS dentists in Scotland who were on a list when this provision came into force on 1st April 2002 should, in fact, be halfway through their third cycle of clinical auditing.

In England this obligation commenced on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2001, and may also be satisfied by means of peer review. For those who joined a list subsequently, the three year cycle commences on that later date.

Even those who practice completely out-with the NHS cannot divest themselves of responsibility in this field, as they are still expected by the GDC to "*continuously review your knowledge, skills and professional performance*" (Standards for Dental Professionals 5.2)

Hamilton says: "It must be accepted that audit is a fact of clinical life, and is likely to gain increasing prominence as dental practitioners are asked to provide evidence of quality control as part of the proposed revalidation process.

"For many hard pressed practitioners who feel that they are already drowning in a flood of regulations, this advice is unlikely to be welcome.

"Yet before deciding that your early retirement provisions constitutes an attractive audit topic, it is worth remembering that this activity does bring it own rewards.

"NHS dentists can claim for additional funding, while the GDC allows audit hours to fulfil a proportion of mandatory CPD requirements."

Hamilton adds: "From a wider perspective, the acquisition of competence in this field should help to improve the overall quality of your healthcare delivery, and thus facilitate a more efficient and hopefully complaint-free practicing life, while avoiding sanctions from the GDC."

Ends

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**Note to editors**

MDDUS is a medical and dental defence organisation providing access to professional indemnity and expert medico- and dento-legal advice for doctors, dentists and other healthcare professionals throughout the UK. For further information on MDDUS go to [www.mddus.com](http://www.mddus.com).