

# PRESS RELEASE



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## BE AWARE OF IMPLICATIONS OF CONTINUOUS REGISTRATION, WARNS MDDUS

Dentists are being urged to make themselves fully aware of continuous registration.

The UK-wide medical defence organisation MDDUS is warning members of the potential impact of the changes on their practices.

Historically, a patient's registration with a dentist in Scotland expired if they failed to attend for three (latterly four) years.

However, last month, the Scottish Government confirmed that *"NHS (General Dental Services) (Scotland) Regulations 1996 are being amended with effect from 1 April 2010 to remove all references to lapsing of a registration period."*

As a result, patients will now remain on their dentist's list, unless deregistered, for an unlimited period - although after three years of non-attendance an 80% reduction will be imposed upon that patient's continuing care or capitation payments.

A recent survey of dentists has revealed deep dissatisfaction amongst the profession with regard to this amendment. However, MDDUS advises that non-time limited registration will soon become an inescapable facet of NHS dentistry in Scotland.

Doug Hamilton, dental advisor, warns: "Even serial non-attenders will automatically remain on a practitioner's register and will therefore be entitled to prompt care if they turn up with severe pain or if their oral health is at imminent risk of deterioration.

"It seems likely that a disproportionate number of such patients will present as emergencies and then tend to have complex treatment and management needs. Therefore, practices with potentially high numbers of casual attenders should consider the implications of this change and plan accordingly".

MDDUS points out that Practitioner Services will issue a monthly list of patients for whom a form GP17 has not been submitted during the preceding three years. Dentists may wish to recall some or all of these patients at this stage or consider the possibility of deregistration.

Alternatively, it may be worthwhile setting aside additional clinical time so that appropriate emergency care can be provided without impacting adversely on the treatment of regular patients.

Furthermore, participants in 'registered-only' out-of-hours schemes should anticipate an incremental increase in demand if they choose to retain large numbers of poor attenders.

It has also been suggested that the implementation of continuous registration will act as a disincentive to those people who have sought regular treatment primarily in order to stay on their dentist's list.

Practitioners are therefore advised to explain the potential ill-effects of allowing attendance intervals to widen significantly, especially in respect of conditions such as periodontal disease.

Hamilton adds: "Logic dictates that extended periods without dental care may lead to extensive or even irreversible problems being discovered once the patients decide to re-attend. Therefore the importance of maintaining an appropriate check-up and preventive regime should be explained and these discussions should be carefully recorded."

Ends

For further information contact Colin Calder on 0141 616 2677 or 07850 510881.

**Note to editors**

MDDUS (Medical and Dental Defence Union of Scotland) is a medical 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).