

Looking to the future

We take a look at the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN) post - registration qualifications

As dental regulation continues to be reformed with a focus on prevention, the role of the dental nurses is changing and this, in turn, is bringing new opportunities. Dental nurses are being encouraged to further develop their knowledge and acquire new skills in extended clinical duties. Increasingly, busy practices want their dental nurses to contribute additional skills and add value to their businesses.

The General Dental Council's (GDC) Scope of Practice (GDC, 2013) has allowed registered nurses to take on more duties, which helps them to further their career and to become a great asset within the dental practice. In order to carry out these extended duties, the GDC has stipulated that further training is needed. The Scope of Practice guidance document sets out the skills and abilities each registrant group should have and describes additional skills that a dental nurse can develop after registration to increase the scope of their practice.

Additional qualifications for a dental nurse post-registration

At present, there are six additional post-registration qualifications that NEBDN offer that dental nurses can obtain which can transform dental nurses' career progression. The NEBDN Prospectus details all of these courses in one handy brochure at

www.nebdn.org but a summary of each course is detailed here:

1. Dental implant nursing Dental implant nursing is an exciting field of dentistry and is an advanced, specialised skill. The role of the dental implant nurse includes surgical and restorative assistance during the many stages of implant treatment. As implantology becomes part of mainstream dental practice, this qualification becomes ever more relevant and sought after. As well as a written exam, there are case studies and practical and



observed assessments. Dentists in this field require a high calibre dental nursing support team capable of dealing with the many challenging aspects of implantology and patient care. Dental Implant Nursing is a new and exciting field of dentistry, in which qualified dental nurses are rightly recognised as a major part of the care team.

2. Dental radiography This course is aimed at dental nurses who want to support their dentists in the diagnosis and treatment planning by providing good diagnostic radiographs. It allows dental nurses to take radiographs on prescription. There is both theoretical and practical training, with a series of coursework assessments and a written exam at the end of the course. This qualification permits a dental nurse to work autonomously, whilst still under the direction of the clinician and whilst working within current UK legislation regarding ionising radiation. This will enable you to interact with patients very differently to conventional chairside assisting. It will also inspire a sense of responsibility and will provide job satisfaction as well as career progression.

3. Dental sedation This course allows the dental nurse to assist as the 'second appropriate person' present as well as the dentist providing the sedation. Suitable for those dental nurses working in an environment routinely providing sedation, the course involves theory and practical work, including case studies and a written exam at the end of the course. Conscious sedation is a vital part of modern dentistry enabling a huge number of patients to have care they otherwise could not tolerate.

4. Oral health education The main focus of this qualification is based on learning the communication skills required to educate patients about their oral health in order to prevent oral disease. The qualification is also about growing both professionally and on a personal level; developing self confidence and self belief. The course involves online studying combined with practical training. Case studies need to be recorded throughout the course, along with a display/exhibition, and there is a written and oral examination at the end.

5. Orthodontics This course is ideal for

dental nurses in specialist practice where skills and knowledge over and above basic dental nursing training would be advantageous in the workplace. Learning covers the various appliances used, how to maintain them, the medio-legal aspects of treatment and the importance of good communication between patient and the dental team. There is a record of experience, case studies, evidence of competences and a written examination.

6. Special care dentistry Candidates for this course are those who help care for people whose health and social care needs may require special oral health care provision. There is a focus on the important role of the dental nurse in organising care, arranging access, liaison with multidisciplinary teams, supporting the patient, families and carers, follow-on care and delivering strong relevant oral health care messages. The qualification aims to improve the understanding of the impact that impairment and disability has on people and their families, helping to develop awareness of their barriers to oral health. This course is similar in assessment structure to the course in orthodontics, as there is a record of experience, case studies, evidence of competences and a written examination.

Examining

The NEBDN has a panel of around 400 examiners who are involved with the various examinations processes. The panel of examiners is made up of registered dental nurses and dentists who have been qualified for more than four years and demonstrate an active involvement in, and commitment to, the training and qualification of dental nurses. NEBDN has just started a research project with Lancaster University Management School students looking at increasing engagement opportunities with examiners, as the traditional role of the examiner has changed and evolved over recent years. This research should reveal new and exciting opportunities to enhance and extend the role and capacity of the examiner that will, in turn, contribute to the development of NEBDN's range of qualifications. Results of the research are due back spring 2017. On appointment, examiners are required to undergo an induction and training programme before

examining. The role can be highly rewarding so if you are interested in putting yourself forward please contact NEBDN.

Conclusion

As the way in which NHS dentistry is being delivered undergoes major change, so too is the regulation of the NHS workforce. Statutory regulation for dental nurses

with mandatory continuing professional development and the need for indemnity have been put in place. The role of the dental nurse has been greatly enhanced and there are now significant extended duty opportunities, as well as a range of post-registration qualifications, that allow dental nurses to further their careers and increase their levels of job satisfaction and salary.



To download the post-registration qualification prospectus, or for more detailed information on NEBDN's range of qualifications, including its Diploma, visit www.nebdn.org