

Editorial

The new Fandangle

Hippocrates described a number of edicts in his 'oath' which are summarised and contained in the phrase 'do no harm'. Graduating dental students take this oath, or its contemporary equivalent, and eagerly proceed into practice. With current knowledge and high enthusiasm, the health, dental and orthodontic professions are enhanced by the graduate's entry into their noble ranks.

As time passes, clinical life becomes more secure as treatment planning and familiarisation with operative skills is cemented with experience. All is comfortable until orthodontic patients start requesting that a new Fandangle appliance be used to treat their problem. What new appliance you wonder and gamely ask? 'You know Doc, the one that treats you in half the time without any effort on my part, or yours, and produces fantastic results that last forever'.

Scepticism is high but realisation dawns that the wondrous Fandangle appliance is being promoted by those 'in the know' and, in the media, to offer treatment and service hitherto unparalleled in dental and orthodontic history. The claims are that more patients are able to be treated more simply, efficaciously and for the benefit of all.

Your oath is challenged and you decide to take courses in Fandangle theory and management as well as join the on-line Fandangle study club. This devotion to acquiring knowledge must come under the guise of continuing professional development and so there would be a benefit on all counts by attending the courses and gaining education points. This must surely be a good thing.

But wait. Is the underpinning concept of continuing professional development being fulfilled by the course in Fandangle studies? According to the Dental Board of Australia, 'CPD is the means by which members of a health profession (or any other profession) maintain, improve and broaden their knowledge, expertise and competence and develop personal and professional qualities required throughout their professional lives'. The onus has been placed on health workers to undertake a lifelong learning process and, over a

period of time, complete a number of educational requirements. The task is not unreasonably onerous and may be achieved by participating in a variety of educational endeavours. The Australian Society of Orthodontists has been proactive in the establishment of the Australian Orthodontic Board which has a continuing educational component as well as clinical peer review. Crickey, the Fandangle course promises to award one hundred and twenty points which is enough for several CPD cycles. Attendance may cost a little but the practice building returns will be handsome, indeed.

The current premise is that any further education is acceptable and worthwhile but who is to say that the course content satisfies educational standards and whether the course presenters are bone fide experts. The universities in Australasia are closely monitored regarding their courses and content. Orthodontic programs are assessed and accredited by three bodies which ensure relevancy, equivalence and the ability of students to be registered as specialists. A university conducts its own internal review, the ASO conducts a peer-reviewed evaluation of programs and the ADC assesses dental and specialist programs every few years. Which body has accredited the Fandangle course and how can so many points be awarded?

The dental CPD concept is in its infancy and it is agreed that its aims are correct and laudable. The policies and methods of CPD will, in time, be reviewed but it is reasonable for the public to expect that health practitioners are competent and will maintain a level of competency throughout their practicing career. It is the level of competency, assessment, the current content and the level of expertise of some educational courses which remain hazy.

What do you think?

Quod scripsi scripsi

Craig Dreyer