



Dentistry in the National Health Service (NHS)

## NHS contract unattractive for dentists

Ever since the National Health Service was founded in the UK in 1948, access to NHS dentistry has been problematic. Free treatment was discontinued in 1951 because it was found to be unaffordable. Since then, a system of subsidies has been in place, with certain patients contributing to the cost of treatment. Alongside this, a strong private dentistry market has developed; an estimated one in seven adults relies on it. This leaves dentists with a real choice about how much NHS work they want to do. Most NHS dentists in the UK are self-employed rather than being directly employed by the health service. Unless they fully meet the terms of their NHS contracts, the money they received will have to be returned. The current NHS contract in England and Wales, dating back to 2006, is unattractive to dentists in that it does not fairly compensate them for their work. Austerity also squeezed budgets, and then the pandemic hit, creating a backlog of patients with worsening oral health. This combination of factors appears to have prompted more dentists to walk away—the numbers doing NHS work dropped by 10 per cent last year. For the British Dental Association (BDA), NHS dentistry is “at a turning point after a decade of underinvestment”. After a decade of “brutal austerity measures”, an additional £880 million per year is needed just to restore funding to 2010 levels. “There doesn’t appear to be a commitment, really, from the Treasury to actually invest in [dentistry]”, said BDA Chair Eddie Crouch. “Patients are having teeth removed because it is a cheaper option than actually saving the teeth. The entire system is set up for health inequalities, and that significantly needs to change.”

Source: BBC research

Measures demanded against externally financing of MCCs

## Germany’s dentistry is top-level



The German Federal Association of Contract Dentists (KZBV), the German Dental Association (BZÄK), and the Conference of Health Ministers of the German Federal States urgently appealed to politicians to take measures against externally funded medical care centres (MCCs), because professional supervisory authorities such as the dental chambers do not have the right of enforcement there. “Dentistry is not a trade”, BZÄK President Professor Christoph Benz said. “Dentistry in our country is top-level internationally—and that without outside capital, which will only lead to profit-related pressure, overuse and misuse of care, and lower treatment quality. Dentistry is a personal service to and for people, not assembly line work.” A unanimous resolution of the Conference of Health Ministers in late June and several surveys on the subject reinforce the calls of BZÄK and KZVB for urgent legislative action. In addition, there have been calls for a mandatory register of MCCs, as well as the disclosure of ownership structures under company law to be displayed directly on the practice sign and website, to promote transparency and patient protection.

Source: IWW Institut für Wissen in der Wirtschaft

### Administration, health care and crime prevention

## Spain—a pioneer of digitisation

Whether in administration, the health care system or the fight against crime: the digital transformation is well ahead in Spain. Next to benefit are the country's countless micro-enterprises. But where there is light, there is shadow: some people feel left behind and complain about a growing digital divide. Tax assessment notices and registration certificates that can be downloaded immediately from the authority's website—without having to stand in line and without protracted processing times. Independent entrepreneurs adjust their pension contributions via the social security fund's website. Citizens monitor government contracting on an official state data portal. The European Commission gives Spain high marks; while the country is still behind the Baltic and Scandinavian states in terms of digitisation, it is well ahead of the larger EU states Germany, France and Italy. As for the state-run health care system, the patient data of all Spaniards are also recorded digitally—the result of a gradual process that began 15 years ago. Meanwhile, there is the electronic health card, there is an app, and prescriptions are stored on a server that the app accesses. Patients visit the pharmacy with their smartphones, open the app and get their medicine. Digitisation proved to be particularly beneficial for the state health care system when it came to the recent vaccination campaigns. A full 82 per cent of Spaniards have received two COVID-19 shots; 87 per cent over age 50 and 92 per cent over age 60 have also received a booster vaccination. Recording the vaccinations statistically was not a problem thanks to the electronic acquisition of patient data. There is also a state vaccination register. Spain is far ahead when it comes to high-speed internet connections, although there are still considerable gaps between coverage in the cities and in the countryside.

Source: *Deutschlandfunk*

### Dental student convicted in Saudi Arabia

## 34 years in prison for a handful of likes?

Saudi PhD student Salma al-Shebab has been sentenced to 34 years in prison and an additional 34-year travel ban—for sharing critical posts on Twitter. Hers is not an isolated case. While the kingdom is opening up socially, it is increasingly turning authoritarian politically. The 34-year-old, a mother of two who is studying dentistry in Leeds (UK), had been arrested while she was visiting her home country. If she really has to serve her sentence to the end, she will be 102 years old by the time she will once again be able to move freely. Al-Shebab's offence, according to the court judgement seen by ESOHR, a Saudi human-rights organisation, was that she had shared on Twitter messages critical of the arrest of women's rights activists in her home country.

Sources: *NZZ/BBC*



Save the date: [FDI World Dental Congress](#)

## 2023 in Sydney—live

“We are thrilled to announce that after four long years the FDI World Dental Congress is returning face-to-face, in Sydney, Australia from 24 to 27 September 2023. We are delighted to co-host this meeting jointly with our member the Australian Dental Association and look forward to welcoming you to the coastal metropolis, Sydney—the largest city of Australia”, reads the announcement on the Federation Dentaire Internationale (FDI) website. The Congress is designed to advance the state-of-the-art in dentistry by presenting an extensive scientific program, interactive forums and a dental exhibition. The world's largest international dental association will thus be “going live” again at its World Congress in 2023.

Source: *FDI*