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EMBARGOED

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Small increase in clinical academic staffing numbers

Data published today by the Dental Schools Council reveal a 4% increase in the number of clinical professors, senior lecturers and lecturers in dentistry during the 2009-10 academic year, to a total of 390 Full Time Equivalents (FTE), and a 20% increase in the number of senior clinical teachers and clinical teachers to a total of 135 FTE.

Whilst dental schools are positive about the increase in total number of clinical academic staff for the fourth consecutive year, the number of research-active clinical academic dentists (Professors, Senior Lecturers, Readers and Lecturers) remain 28% lower than in 2000. Since 2005, with the smallest number of dental clinical academics (433 FTE) in the decade, there has been a 25% expansion in student numbers and the creation of three new dental schools (Peninsula, Aberdeen, UCLan); the number of clinical academics has increased by 21% in this time, but the number of research-active clinical academic dentists has shrunk by a further 10% (to 390 FTE).

Key findings of the Dental Schools Council survey as at 31 July 2010 are:

- There were 525 FTE (876 individuals) clinical academics in post at 31 July 2010.
- The Higher Education Funding Councils contributed 78% of funding for clinical academic posts in 2010, with 20% of posts funded by the NHS and just 2% from other sources.
- The number of Professors has increased from 91 FTE in 2000 to 112 FTE in 2010.
- 62% of Professors, Senior Lecturers and Lecturers are aged over 46, compared with 51% in 2004. 48% of clinical teachers and senior clinical teachers are aged over 46.
- Women now make up 36% of the clinical academic team compared with 32% in 2004. Women continue to be under-represented at senior clinical academic grades, however 18% of all clinical professors are women, compared with 11% in 2004.
- The small staffing levels in some dental specialties render them particularly vulnerable to change, with six of the fifteen specialties numbering fewer than 18 FTE compared with three specialties in 2000.

Chair:

Professor WP Saunders BDS PhD FDS RCS Edin
FDS RCPS Glas FDS RCS Eng MRD FHEA FHKAM
Dean of Dentistry, University of Dundee

Executive Secretary and Treasurer:

Professor F Fortune CBE, BDS MBBS MRCP, FRCP, FDS
RCSeng, FGDP, PhD, DipEd teachers Med/Dent
Director, Institute of Dentistry, Queen Mary University of London

- Across all specialties, there were 44 FTE vacant posts. Nine dental schools report difficulties in recruitment, including the small pool of potential applicants with sufficient expertise, and uncertainty around future funding leading to recruitment freezes.

Professor William P Saunders, Chair of the Dental Schools Council, said 'Clinical academia is one of the most rewarding dental careers involving exploratory research, teaching and patient care. The increase in the number of clinical academics is encouraging, but the challenges in delivering high quality research and teaching, alongside clinical service to the NHS, will inevitably be compounded by budget cuts to both health and higher education.

'Teaching and training in dentistry is incredibly intensive, and the pressure on staff with the 25% increase in student numbers is significant. As a community of dental schools, we look to work closely to protect and support the quality of teaching and research, as well as the contributions of clinical academics to the NHS and of clinicians to academia.'

The recent survey of Oral Health in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (Health & Social Care Information Centre 2011) highlighted the importance of oral health to the health of the population. Although oral health has improved overall, dental care is becoming much more complex as older populations retain teeth, whilst severe periodontal (gum) disease has increased slightly in the last decade. Dental schools and the dental clinical academic staff therein are responsible for training and preparing future generations of dentists to provide care in this changing and increasingly complicated world. They are also responsible for most of the research, innovation and technological development that will help improve health and reduce costs in the long term.

The survey can be accessed online at: www.dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk

Notes to editors:

1. This is the ninth data update to be published by the Dental Schools Council since 2000. 18 dental schools returned data on clinical academic grade, specialty, percentage full-time, source of funding, age, gender and ethnicity for each individual in post as at 31 July 2010.
2. For the purpose of the Dental Schools Council survey, a dental clinical academic is defined as someone who;
 - a. has full registration with the General Dental Council; and
 - b. holds a substantive contract of employment with the university; and
 - c. holds an honorary or formal A+B clinical contract with the NHS.
3. The Dental Schools Council is the authoritative voice of the Heads and Deans of the University Dental Schools across the United Kingdom. The Council is currently chaired by Professor William P Saunders, Dean of the School of Dentistry, University of Dundee. Its Executive Director is Dr Katie Petty-Saphon.
4. For more information please contact: Amy Stringer, Communications Officer, on 020 7419 5427
5. For further information about the work of the Dental Schools Council please see www.dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk

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