



The UK National Cohort Study Evaluating Dental Vocational Training

**Dental Vocational Training Years
2003/04, 2004/05, 2005/06**

**North Western Deanery Executive Summary:
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behalf of the DVT Evaluation Group

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BACKGROUND

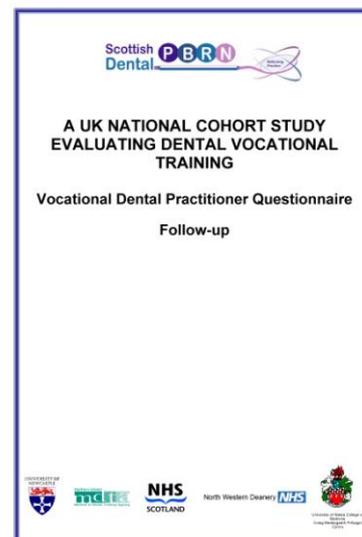
In August 2003 Scotland became the first UK country to introduce formal assessment as a mandatory part of the VT year. Legislation requiring 'satisfactory' completion was enacted in 2004.

Little is known about the impact of mandatory assessment and satisfactory completion on VDP outcomes from VT. The purpose of the UK National Cohort Study was to address this gap by conducting a longitudinal, comprehensive, comparative outcomes evaluation of VT in areas of the UK with and without a mandatory system of assessment. The study was conducted by the Scottish Dental Practice Based Research Network in collaboration with the VT teams in the North Western and Northern Deaneries in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

The overall aims were to:

- evaluate VDP outcomes from the VT programme;
- investigate if outcomes differ in areas of the UK with and without formal assessment.

Outcomes were assessed by means of self-administered questionnaires completed during the 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06 VT years. This document presents a summary of the results for VDPs in the North Western Deanery.



RESULTS

Psychological Health

Psychological health was measured using the twelve-item version of the General Health Questionnaire. The majority of VDPs in the North Western Deanery exhibited a 'low' GHQ-12 score. There was no statistically significant difference between VDPs in the North Western Deanery and VDPs in Scotland or VDPs in the other deaneries.

Clinical and Non-Clinical Confidence

The majority of VDPs in the North Western Deanery were confident in their clinical practice. There is evidence that VDPs in the North Western Deanery were less confident than VDPs in Scotland in several areas of clinical practice. In their non-clinical practice VDPs were confident in their professional interactions with other members of the dental team, but were less confident in areas concerning NHS legislation, rules and regulations, and business development. There were no statistically significant differences in non-clinical confidence between VDPs in the North Western Deanery and VDPs in Scotland or VDPs in the other deaneries.

Clinical Decision Making

Clinical decision making was evaluated using a scenario format in which VDPs were presented with a situation where they had to decide whether or not to follow a described course of clinical behaviour. In no scenario was there a unanimous decision across VDPs as to whether they would proceed or not with the described course of clinical behaviour. In two scenarios – rubber dam and non-sterilised instruments – there was a 'correct' course of action. Results suggest some VDPs are unaware of or misunderstand the potential implications of following the incorrect course of action in these situations. There were a number of statistically significant across-deanery differences.

Professional Identity

The majority of VDPs in the North Western Deanery agreed being a caring, competent and ethical dentist was important and easy. VDPs thought they would not be caring, competent and ethical dentists if they were to provide a treatment that was best for their practice, no matter what anyone else thought or if they were to provide a treatment the patient wanted, even if they did not believe the patient was right.

Continued Professional Development

VDPs intended to keep up CPD and the majority were confident they could do so, but there was awareness that this may be stressful and difficult. At this stage in their career, the GDC, their trainers and their peers had the greatest influence on CPD behaviour while patients had the least influence. VDPs in the North Western Deanery felt significantly more pressure from the GDC to keep up CPD than VDPs in either Scotland or the other deaneries.

Attitudes to Dental Vocational Training

VDPs in the North Western Deanery found most aspects of VT beneficial, useful, comforting and/or easy. They exhibited a less positive attitude towards formal assessment than VDPs in Scotland, but thought this type of assessment was more beneficial and useful than VDPs in the other deaneries. There were a number of other statistically significant differences between VDPs in the North Western Deanery and VDPs in both Scotland and the other deaneries in their attitudes towards VT.

Organisation and Management of Training Practice

VDPs' perceptions of the organisation and management of their training practices were generally positive. Practices and practice staff were thought to be well prepared for their arrival. Trainers' clinical and teaching skills were considered excellent or very good. Tutorials were considered relevant and well structured and trainers viewed difficulties as a chance for VDP learning. There were a number of statistically significant differences between VDPs in the North Western Deanery and VDPs in both Scotland and the other deaneries.

Attitudes to Work

Attitudes to work were mixed. VDPs agreed that they had been properly trained for their work, were useful most of the time and were developing new skills. Most were satisfied with their choice of dentistry as a career, but a minority did not see themselves continuing in dentistry. VDPs were afraid of making mistakes, afraid of litigation and agreed that patients could be too demanding. There were a number of statistically significant differences between VDPs in the North Western Deanery and VDPs in Scotland and VDPs in the other deaneries. In these instances the responses of VDPs in the North Western Deanery tended to be less positive.

Career Intentions

More than three quarters of the North Western Deanery's VDPs intend to practice within the area of the North Western Deanery on completion of their VT year. The majority intend to work full-time and provide NHS care, but a small minority intend to enter private practice (with no NHS commitment) or leave the profession.

SUMMARY

This study has provided the first UK wide, comparative, longitudinal outcomes evaluation of VT. In general the results show that VDPs in the North Western Deanery are confident in their clinical and non-clinical abilities, make considered treatment decisions, and have positive intentions and attitudes towards keeping up their continued professional development. Whilst there were differences in outcomes between VDPs in the North Western Deanery, who are not subject to any formal assessment and VDPs in Scotland who are subject to mandatory formal assessment, there were also differences between VDPs in the North Western Deanery and the other deaneries (both of whom are not subject to mandatory formal assessment). Within and across cohorts VDPs in all participating deaneries felt confident and prepared at the end of their VT year. However, there is some evidence that mandatory formal assessment has beneficial effects and this study is, therefore, an important step forward in understanding its impact in VT.

Acknowledgements

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