

Trends and lessons from the Mediation Report

- for the period 1 July 2020 - 30 September 2020

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In the past year, I have been spending time reading and observing the trends regarding the type and nature of cases that our dental mediator receives. I am of the firm view that if one studies this, you may learn one or two things that may improve the way you interact with patients and avoid many issues associated with an unhappy patient.

I am publishing the Mediation Report for the period 1 July 2020 – 30 September 2020, as presented by our dental mediator, Dr J Barnard.

INTRODUCTION

It is with pride that I present the mediation report for the period 1 July 2020 to 30 September 2020 to the national council. Firstly, I want to thank SADA for the opportunity to take responsibility for the complaint resolution service

during 2020 and the continuous backup and support when needed. Special thanks to Punkaj, KC and Dr WP van Zyl for their constant assistance and support. Without them, it would not be possible to run an efficient and professional service.

During the third quarter, the mediation office received numerous patient complaints and inquiries related to PPE charges. Dentists charged anything between R50.00 and R440.00 per visit for PPE, often without explaining the need for these charges and the costs involved before the patient's appointment. Complaints varied from overcharging for PPE to concerns about inadequate infection control. Thankfully the dust has settled, and things are slowly returning to normal.

Let's look at the statistics for the period 1 July 2020 - 30 September 2020.

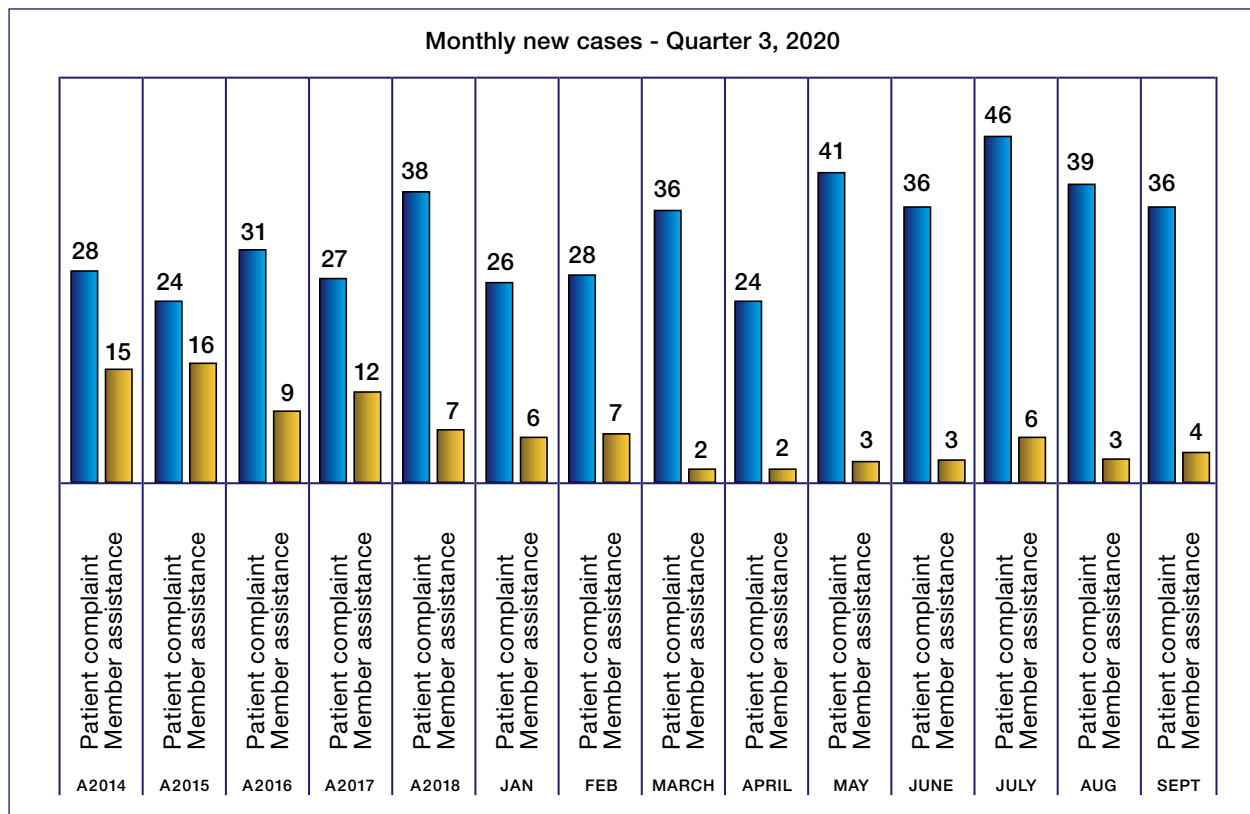


Figure 1. Monthly new cases 1 July 2020 - 30 September 2020.

Khomi C Makhubele: Chief Executive Officer, SADA

Analysis of Figure 1

The self-explanatory chart above illustrates the number of new cases accepted monthly in this period (1 July 2020 - 30 September 2020) compared to monthly averages of the previous five years. An increase in the number of patients contacting SADA in 2020 compared to the last four years is noted. July has been busier than usual, mostly with PPE related inquiries and complaints.

Analysis of Figure 2

The majority of new cases accepted in this period (1 July 2020- 30 September 2020) were fee or medical aid related issues (42%). The increase in complaints in this category is mostly because of the PPE related issues raised earlier.

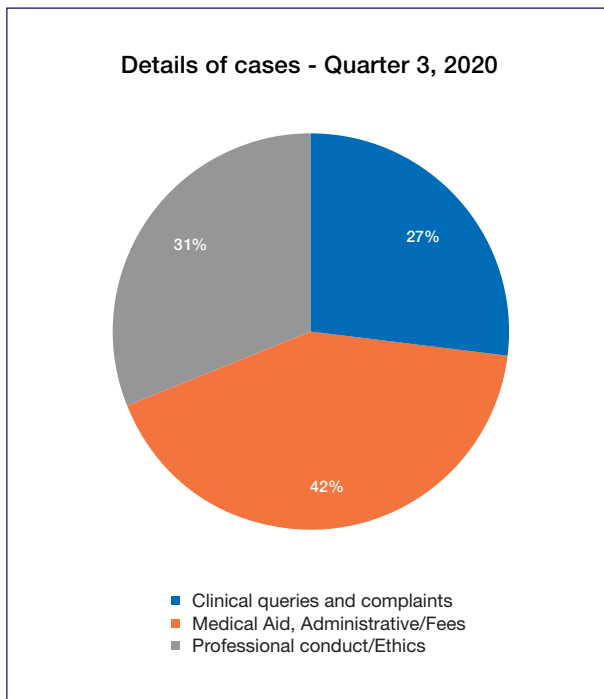


Figure 2. Nature of new cases received 1 July 2020 - 30 September 2020.

In only 27% of the cases accepted in this period, the patient complained about the perceived quality of the clinical treatment. In these cases, the clinician either failed to achieve the desired therapeutic goals, meet the pre-operative expectations of the patient, or failed to manage postoperative complications.

Most practitioners or their staff are aware of the patient's disappointment but fail to address the needs and expectations of the patient at the practice level.

This results in a relationship breakdown causing the patient to phone SADA or report the matter to the HPCSA.

During the third quarter (1 November 2019 - 30 June 2020), a total of 121 patients contacted the Mediator with their complaints and inquiries. A total of 13 dentists/SADA members contacted the Mediator for assistance with a patient complaint.

Of the 134 cases accepted, only 69 needed some form of mediation. The remaining 65 cases just required advice, reassurance or information. Mostly about treatment codes, the dentist's fees, treatment options and postoperative complications.

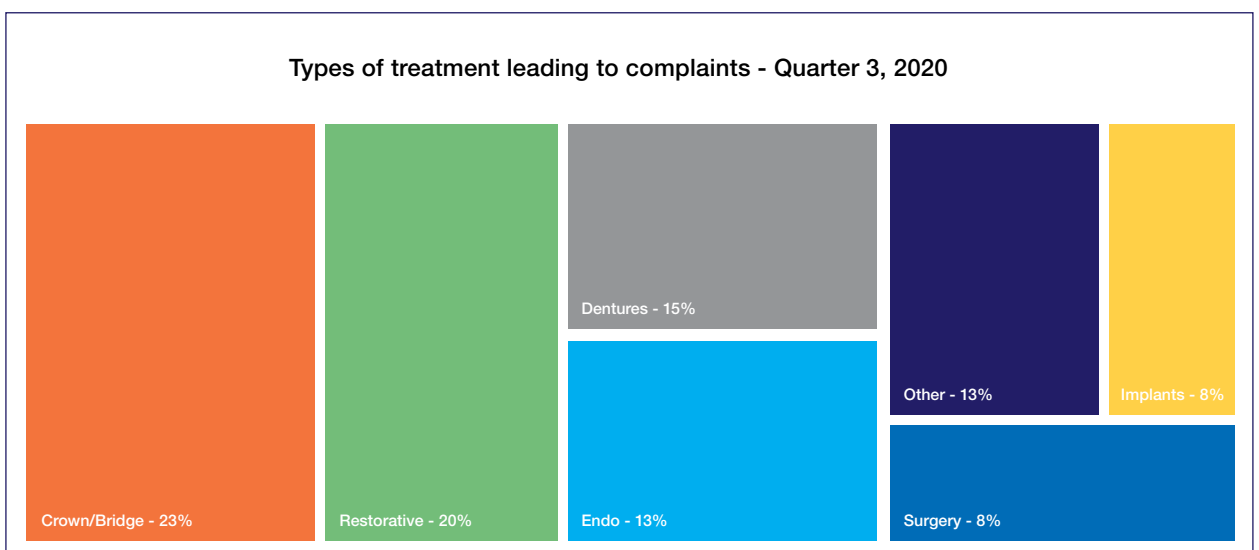


Figure 3. Types of treatment leading to complaints - Quarter 3, 2020.

Analysis of Figure 3

The majority of cases in Quarter 3 is associated with crown and bridge treatment (23%), and routine restorative treatment (20%). These figures compare well with previous periods.

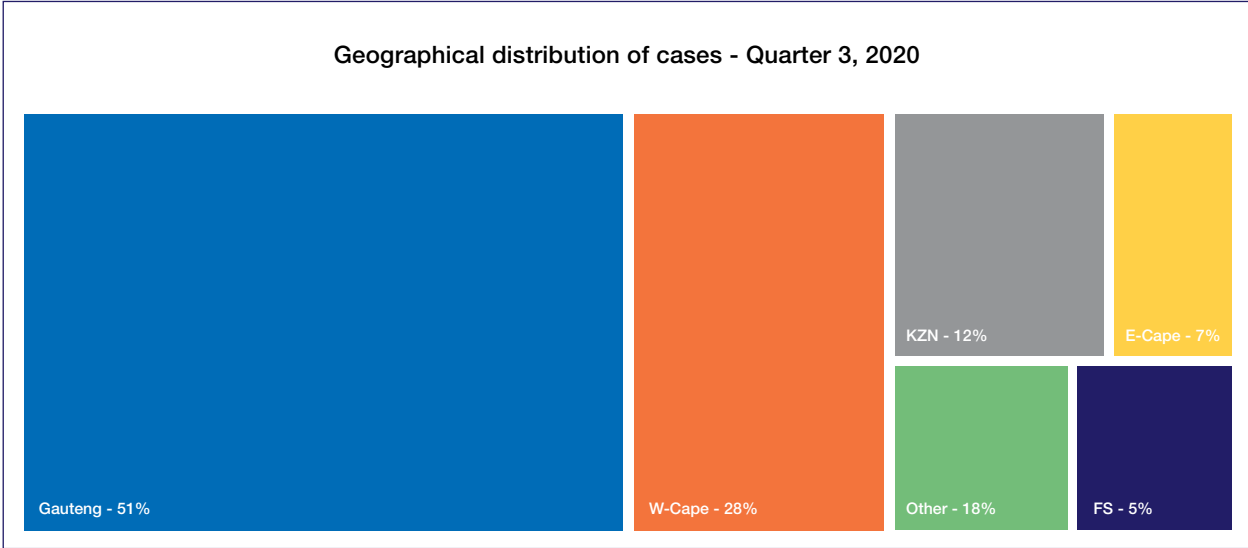


Figure 4. Geographical distribution of cases - Quarter 3, 2020.

Analysis of Figure 4

In this period most cases originated in Gauteng (51%), followed by Western Cape (28%) and KZN (12%).

In most cases, complainants chose English as a preferred language to communicate (49%), closely followed by Afrikaans (38%). The remaining 13% of complainants would have preferred to communicate in an African language.

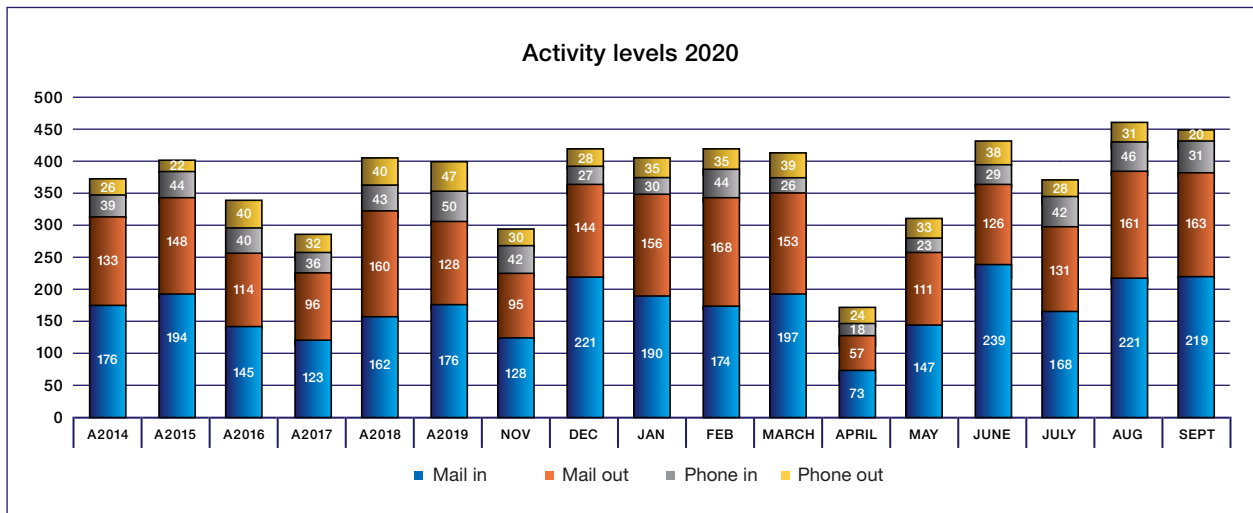


Figure 5. The monthly activity of the Mediator - Quarter 3, 2020.

Analysis of Figure 5

This chart reflects the monthly activity levels of the Mediation office during 2020 compared to the monthly averages of the previous five years. The activity levels and workload of the Dental Mediator office in 2020 have increased compared to the last five years. April has been unusually quiet as expected during the Level 5 Lockdown period.

I am pleased to report a successful period of mediation thanks to excellent cooperation from colleagues and patients.