In October, the Private Independent Aesthetic Practices Association (PIAPA) held its first ever Step Ahead session, with standout presentations on polydioxanone threads, making successful insurance claims and the work of Health Education England. Association cofounder Yvonne Senior discusses her event highlights and shares her thoughts on why the event was such a success.

Following the overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees of the first Step Ahead session last month, it is now a good opportunity to reflect on the components of an event that lead to the level of satisfaction achieved in the association’s first ever continuing professional development (CPD) event.

The association’s Step Ahead sessions were ultimately designed to provide an all round top up of information for any medical aesthetic professional in the form of financial, medical, regulatory and practical advice. Although many of the speakers came from leading industry companies, the aim is not to preach and sell at the audience, but to inform them include them for the purpose of progress and support.

We would like to thank members who attended because an event without people is not an event at all. The members who attended have supported our group for years and although they gain valuable information and contacts through us there is a mutual relationship in the sense that the group cannot exist without its members and vice versa. We feel it is reasonable to add that, although relatively small in number, our members are passionate and engaged creating a formidable force that drives towards our essential goal of good practice and clinical excellence.

Another contributing factor to the day’s success was the calibre of speakers who participated and their excellent delivery of information to the group. We aimed to make the whole day an all-encompassing event, choosing our speakers carefully for a multi-pronged approach that addresses the many elements of the average aesthetic practitioner’s business. We are confident that the PIAPA cupcakes we handed out on the day were a hit too.

Janine Revill, Director of Cosmetic Insurance, shared great examples of how complaints and claims can escalate and outlined top tips on how to handle them. She stressed the importance of being proactive with your insurers, knowing how to recognise the beginnings of a claim and notifying your insurers immediately as a late reaction can cause them to refuse cover. She added that, far too often, clinicians delay in informing their medical indemnity insurers about a potential problem, thereby denying themselves access to specialist assistance that could save them time and money.

Roger Smallwood stirred up high interest in what was probably the most arduous topic of the day: VAT. Roger’s accounting company Avondale Medical specialises in number crunching and providing advice to medical practices, and his revelations on treatments which are and are not subject to VAT, along with his back to basics accounting tips, were extremely well received.

Cheryl Barton discussed the advantages of subscribing to publications such as the Journal of Aesthetic Nursing, outlining the benefits of regular up-to-date information on emerging trends which is peer-reviewed. It was new information to us that you could bundle titles together such as the journal and the prescribing journal. Cheryl’s passion for the specialty and the application of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) code to the work of aesthetic practitioners was unquestionable and a speaker like her is always excellent at reigniting some enthusiasm in spectators.

Carol Jolie and I then tackled the ever-changing and complex issues of the developing Health Education England framework and the impending revalidation pilot phase for aesthetic nurses. Carol outlined how rapidly HEE releases can go out of date as we constantly forge forward forming the practicable framework for toxin, while I disseminated the information regarding revalidation provided to us by PIAPA’s links at the NMC. Both topics induced a high level of debate, as often is the case, and although the consensus among attendees was to exclude beauticians from administering botulinum toxin, it is difficult to see the government taking action on this. The truth is that even as expert reference group members all we can do is recommend—we will never truly have the final say.

Undoubtedly, the highlight of the day was the session led by the fantastic Jacques Otto on polydioxanone (PDO) threading. It left our members in awe following a comprehensive and effortless demonstration of this growing treatment area. Jacques’ put PDO threading treatments into context by firstly explaining the history and plotting the journey of the more invasive and complex threads once used in comparison to PDO threading. It was the session led by the fantastic Jacques Otto on polydioxanone (PDO) threading.

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