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Dean's Update

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DEAN'S UPDATE



IAN MILLS
FGDP(UK) DEAN

WELCOME TO THE 10TH VOLUME ANNIVERSARY ISSUE OF THE *PRIMARY DENTAL JOURNAL*. I HOPE YOU ENJOY THE ECLECTIC MIX OF PAPERS IN OUR ANNUAL GENERAL EDITION.

As I write this update, we are still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and although there appears to be light at the end of the tunnel with the roll out of the vaccination programme, times are still tough. Our thoughts go out to those who are suffering physically, mentally, emotionally and financially from this crisis.

We must consider ourselves fortunate that we are not having to face such physically and emotionally demanding roles as colleagues in the ICU, but nonetheless the stress and pressure within general dental practice has been immense over the last year. The continuing uncertainty has been particularly difficult to manage as practices attempt to get back to some level of normality. Many of our colleagues are fearful of the potential risks from COVID-19, others are anxious about the long-term security of their jobs or their businesses, and we are all concerned about what the future may hold and what dentistry will look like as we rebuild from the wreckage of the pandemic.

We still have many challenges ahead, but at least it is nice to know that dental services are now officially recognised as essential. Although we surely knew this already, it is nice to have it officially confirmed by the Department of Health!

As an essential service in high demand, there is no doubt that there will be growing pressure for dental practices across the UK to return to normal as quickly as possible. This is excellent news in many regards, but we cannot let the

clamour for our services undermine safety or enforce a return to the NHS UDA treadmill. We must grasp this opportunity to transform NHS dentistry by putting prevention at the centre of what we do and by prioritising quality over quantity. As a profession, we have coped with this crisis admirably, showing remarkable strength and resilience throughout, and demonstrated a willingness to work together for the benefit of our colleagues and our patients.

There have been occasions when different factions within the dental profession have been slow to support or quick to criticise colleagues. This has not been helpful, and has led to further division, uncertainty and frustration for many. We must recognise that we are in this together, and a strong, united profession is better for all members of the dental team, and most importantly for our patients.

I have previously spoken about the need for collaboration, and there have been many examples over the last year when this has been the case. Our own COVID-19 Guidance is an excellent example of a project where many organisations came together to work for the good of our profession and our patients, as is the SDCEP Recommendations on AGPs, the Dental Deans webinars, and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion work by the BDA/FGDP(UK).

Looking forwards, I believe that the new College of General Dentistry (CGDent) will play a pivotal role in bringing organisations together. CGDent will be a recognised authority providing

leadership for dentistry as the profession develops its capacity to adapt in a fast-evolving healthcare environment. I am delighted to report that the current enthusiasm for collaboration has extended to our relationship with RCS England. Discussions around separation are on track to deliver the transfer of FGDP(UK) to the new College on 1st July 2021. A historic moment, which I am sure we will look back on with pride.

A career in general dental practice can be tough, particularly at the present time, but it is also immensely rewarding and fulfilling. The eclectic mix of papers within this particular issue of *PDJ* gives some indication of the amazing breadth of knowledge and skills we have at our disposal as generalists. The range of articles provides evidence of the importance of continuing professional development across a range of disciplines and topics in dentistry, and I am very grateful to Igor, Hillevi and the authors for delivering such a high-quality edition of our journal.

It has been an honour to be the 10th Dean of the FGDP(UK) and I count myself incredibly fortunate to have worked with a fabulous group of friends and colleagues at the Faculty and within the wider dental profession. 2020 was a tough year, and 2021 did not get off to an ideal start. Despite this, I have no doubt that there are good times ahead. Many inspirational colleagues have stepped forward during the pandemic and I am confident that our future will be safe in their hands. I very much look forward to supporting them from the touchline.