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DEAN'S UPDATE



IAN MILLS
FGDP(UK) DEAN

WELCOME TO THE WINTER EDITION OF THE *PRIMARY DENTAL JOURNAL*. MAY I FIRSTLY TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO WISH YOU ALL THE BEST FOR 2021. I SINCERELY HOPE THAT THE NEW YEAR BRINGS YOU BETTER FORTUNE THAN YOU HAVE PERHAPS ENJOYED OVER THE LAST TWELVE MONTHS.

I have previously written about New Year being a time of reflection, and as a young lad growing up in Scotland this was always a very special time. My mother would open the front door at midnight on Hogmanay to usher out the old year and welcome in the new. After the last twelve months, I'm sure many of us are only too happy to see the back of 2020.

I had a brief look at some of my comments from my Dean's update from this time last year, in which I naively remarked that '2019 was a challenging year for many'. I went on to detail some of the challenges facing dentistry, including NHS funding, burdensome regulation, unrealistic expectations and increasing risk of litigation. I then confidently proclaimed that 'despite such a pessimistic outlook, I have high hopes for 2020'. How wrong could I be!

2020 has been a tough year for everyone, and there are few who have not been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Those working in primary dental care have been severely impacted, with many struggling to survive, financially, emotionally and psychologically. The damage across the dental industry has been widespread, and it has been particularly acute for those in the private sector and our colleagues in the dental laboratory industry. Friends and colleagues have lost jobs, businesses, and their future. The personal tragedy has been equally hard and the toll on the dental profession likely to be felt for many years to come.

Despite the challenges which the profession has faced, I am confident that

dentistry will survive and that we will come back stronger. The last twelve months have borne witness to the strength, resilience and determination of the dental profession, and I am proud of the way which so many of my colleagues responded in adversity. There was a commitment to work together and this was obvious at a local, regional and national level.

I was particularly proud of the way the FGDP(UK) staff, Board and members stepped up to help the profession during this difficult time by selflessly supporting colleagues and patients. This was an unprecedented experience, and I was incredibly fortunate to be surrounded by an outstanding group of individuals who were willing to do so much for the Faculty, our members and the wider profession.

My optimism for dentistry in 2021 is undiminished by recent experience. I believe the colleagues who have come through the last year have grown in confidence, experience and fortitude, and that dentistry is safe in their hands. The last twelve months have also confirmed the importance of the dental profession in maintaining oral health, and the potential consequences when access is denied.

The lockdown of dental services during the pandemic, and the subsequent restrictions on the use of AGPs, has undoubtedly had an impact on oral health and treatment decision making for both dentists and patients. Anecdotal evidence would suggest that reduced access to care will have resulted in

progression of disease, with teeth sustaining damage which could possibly have been avoided. As we slowly return to some semblance of normality, this backlog of treatment is likely to lead to increasing pressure on clinical services and the need to provide more complex treatment, including endodontics.

The world may have shifted on its axis over the last twelve months but there will still be significant demand for our services, patient expectations will remain high, and the threat of litigation will not dissipate. It is therefore important that we are able to deliver dental care to a high standard, not only for the benefit of our patients, but also for our own professional fulfilment and self-preservation.

I am therefore delighted that this issue of *PDJ* is focusing on endodontics. From my own experience, endo can pose significant challenges and it is important to take a methodical, step wise approach to every aspect of treatment. The series of articles presented here will undoubtedly provide the reader with a valuable resource to help address many of the issues we encounter on a regular basis, and provide excellent advice on how to manage them. I am extremely grateful to Igor, Hillevi, Shalini and all the authors for the work they have put into the production of another excellent edition of *PDJ*.

As we bid farewell to 2020, we can begin to look forward to an exciting future for FGDP(UK). In June 2021, the Faculty will separate from the Royal College of Surgeons of England and form the new College of General Dentistry. This is a historic moment for dentistry, and despite the various challenges ahead, I have no doubt that the dental profession has a bright future. If the pandemic has taught us anything, it has shown that we have some very talented and committed individuals who have the experience, the resilience and the determination to succeed, even when faced with adversity.

Thank you to everyone for their support during the last twelve months, and I wish you all the very best for 2021.