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# Dean's Update

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# DEAN'S UPDATE



IAN MILLS  
FGDP(UK) DEAN

WELCOME TO THE SPRING ISSUE OF THE *PRIMARY DENTAL JOURNAL*. I HOPE YOU ENJOY THE ECLECTIC MIX OF PAPERS THAT MAKE UP OUR ANNUAL GENERAL ISSUE.

The themed issues of PDJ are extremely popular, but the addition of a general one allows the flexibility to include a group of disparate but relevant articles on a regular basis. My thanks again to Igor, Hillevi and all the authors for compiling a varied and interesting selection of articles, which I trust will be highly relevant to everyday practice.

In my last Dean's Update, I focused on the important work which has been done at the Faculty in partnership with the new College of General Dentistry (CGDent). This continues, but clearly our main focus in recent weeks has been on dealing with the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact this is having throughout our profession. At the time of writing, those of us working in general dental practice are being hit particularly hard, and my thoughts are with you all as you act to protect your staff, your patients, your practices and your families. The FGDP(UK) will be there to support you as best we can.

I have previously highlighted our eagerness to engage with early careers dentists, and in particular, to ensure that women are adequately represented within our organisation. The new College is also committed to establishing itself as an academic home for the **WHOLE** dental team - not just dentists. I believe that this inclusive approach is critical to the success of CGDent, and key to the long-term future of the dental profession in the UK. I am delighted that we are making progress, but there is still much to do, particularly in relation to the wider dental team.

Over many years, FGDP(UK) has established strong relationships with all the key professional stakeholders in dentistry. The voice of the Faculty is highly respected and valued within the profession, and the credibility of the new College will trade heavily on this legacy during its formative years.

The credibility and standing of FGDP(UK) has been established over many years. It is based on uncompromising standards in clinical practice, high quality education, respected examinations and a commitment to professionalism. The Faculty is widely regarded as an organisation with integrity, and as one which has enjoyed a long record of collaboration, whether that be with RCS England, the Faculties of Dental Surgery, the NHS, the GDC or the BDA. We work well with others, and are keen to collaborate if the outcome is good for the profession and good for patient care.

This can sometimes be a challenge, as individual stakeholders often focus on their own organisation rather than working together towards the collective benefit of the dental profession or improvement in patient care. I have seen this "silo-mentality" repeatedly during my time in dentistry, but I hope that in building strong relationships with other organisations, FGDP(UK) and CGDent will be in a position to promote collaboration across the profession.

Ironically, I believe that our impending separation from RCS England will lead to greater inclusivity and collaboration within dentistry, and allow the new College to engage with members of the profession who have previously felt unrepresented or

isolated. Working in General Dental Practice necessitates the development of a wide range of skills, including mutual respect, teamwork, collaboration, communication and empathy. These critical skills are equally important when dealing with colleagues as they are when caring for patients, and this might be something we should all try to embrace.

Dentistry often reflects wider society, and I would suggest that we currently have issues of inequality within our profession, poverty of ambition and a growing intolerance of others who dare to have contrasting views. We inhabit a world where confirmation bias has become the norm, with polarised views becoming increasingly entrenched within our society. Dentistry is no exception, and our intransigent views are constantly reinforced by what we read, whom we listen to and whom we follow on Twitter. Every day objectivity is being undermined, despite our professional rhetoric around evidence-based practice and critical appraisal.

The Faculty does a lot to address these issues. An excellent example is our Divisional Study Days, which are held throughout the UK each year. These study days offer an opportunity for members of the dental team to gain high quality CPD, but more importantly, they provide a friendly environment to engage with colleagues, share experiences, socialise and rekindle our passion and enthusiasm for dentistry. The value of such events should not be underestimated, and in my opinion, FGDP(UK) Study Days serve an important role in addressing many of the challenges we currently face in dentistry.