



L-R: Miranda Steeples, Jenny Harris, Robert Ireland, Heidi Cresswell, Avijit Banerjee

PROF ROBERT IRELAND ANNUAL LECTURE

By **Fiona Ellwood**

The Society of British Dental Nurses (SBDN) hosted the Prof Robert Ireland Annual Lecture on 23 September.

The annual event as always brought an audience together that represented a broad range of professional groups from the dental arena, all passionate about their roles. Having the professional societies in the room said everything – achieving better oral health for all is a priority.

Prof Ireland talked about teamwork and utilising the full team, and the chosen focus this year was how to improve children's oral health as a team. He was a very early adopter of skill-mix and is currently involved in research looking at interprofessional education, which certainly struck a chord with the audience.

The event included three speakers; the first speaker was Jenny Harris, Consultant Community Paediatric Dentist at Sheffield and the immediate past President of the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD). Dr Jenny Harris is known for the development and introduction of a range of user-friendly resources and tools. Her focus was on the rights of children and how we must play a part in helping children have their rights upheld in oral care. 'Rights from the Start' is a campaign with a free download poster highlighting the global rights children have that we need to uphold and support

for all young people across the planet. Another fantastic resource was the '3 key points' initiative, to help prevent information overload and allow parents, carers and family members to take the 3 key points away.

Jenny also shared tools she co-created to support the whole dental team be prepared for child safeguarding, housed on the British Dental Association site, and the resources often referenced by the SBDN Special Care Group – Advice for parents of children with autism, to name but a few.

The second speaker was Miranda Steeples, President of the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (BSDHT) sharing her own clinical experience of treating children from two points of view, her clinical practice as a dental hygienist and as a dental therapist here in UK, and in her voluntary role in clinics in Cambodia. Miranda touched on making the best clinical decisions that are right for the patient and putting that care in context of the environment and the presenting factors. She made a strong case for advocating for the patient and believing in yourself and your decisions, even if in different settings and circumstances the treatments may be different. It was also a huge reminder that oral health wellness is a global issue and that children across the globe have oral health needs.

Our final speaker of the day was

Professor Avijit Banerjee from King's College London who as always, challenged the audience and their thinking. The sentiment of his talk reminded us that behaviour change is required from the very core of our health services and from a united approach. There was a stark reminder that the current model is disease focused, not prevention-focused, and that this is not new. He emphasised that the talking needs to turn into action reflecting on the work of Prof Ireland some 50 years ago. Professor Banerjee spoke of his courses at King's that have a team focus and the piece of the jigsaw that everyone needs to grasp – the model of minimal intervention oral care as a preventative way forward.

The rallying cry of the day was to adopt one language and process for treating caries and making prevention the key priority. The takeaway messages were:

- Everyone should and must consider the rights of the child in their clinics
- Every child should and must be respected and your professional judgements should and must respect the needs of that child
- The need for all who communicate about oral health to work together, inclusive of industry
- Oral health messaging needs to be more constant in people's lives.

The final call to action to us all was to help make this happen.