

BEWARE AND BE AWARE

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The BDJ Upfront section includes editorials, letters, news, book reviews and interviews.

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There are some topics that we have to return to, like it or not. One has been the General Dental Council (GDC) which has dominated the profession's agenda in recent times and continues to distort our priorities away from patient care by its self-serving attitude and manifest ineptitude. But we are right to concern ourselves with it.

Another is the rising tide of concern over fake dental materials, instruments and equipment. I wrote an editorial on this in March 2015¹ and we have covered the matter variously in this Journal, in *BDJ In Practice* and in *BDJ Team*. However, and here the GDC is involved once again since there is to be a fitness to practise hearing involving the use of counterfeit equipment, things have taken an even more serious turn. Because of timings, the results of the hearing will be known before you read this but the reason for considering this subject again is to stress the increasing importance of being aware that purchasing and using fake products is a serious concern.

The British Dental Industry Association (BDIA) has been running the Counterfeit and Substandard Instrument and Devices Initiative for some time now to draw attention to the dangers and to advise on how to avoid them. It has three main aims: to promote awareness of the dangers of poor quality counterfeit and illegal dental instruments and devices; provide a quick and simple method of reporting these to the relevant bodies; and to promote purchasing only from reputable manufacturers and suppliers, such as BDIA members. The BDA has strongly backed the campaign,

'...if a price seems too good to be true, then it probably is too good to be true...'

as have many other associations and organisations within dentistry, and is anxious to advise members on how best to avoid such pitfalls. The overriding consideration is that if a price seems too good to be true, then it probably is too good to be true. If we know that the established market price for a handpiece, for example, is £x, and in a sale or special promotion is being offered at a £x - 10% or even greater discount then that is a probably a good deal. If it is available on the internet at a fraction of the usual price then it starts to raise questions of its legitimacy.

We all like a bargain, of course we do. That is human nature; witness the crowds fighting to get the best offers every year in the January sales or on the recently invented Black Friday. Additionally, we are variously business people charged with making our skills profitable. The less we buy for, the greater the margin. It is what every livelihood is about. But here is where the difference lies, our businesses are not about the successful mark-up of a tin of baked beans, they are about the ethical treatment of patients. Our responsibility is to them, and to our team members, and to their safety while they are in our care.

Quite aside from our own ethical stance, collectively and individually, patients are also becoming sensitised to the situation through television and newspaper stories and the immediacy and comprehensive nature of social media. But, as I have written previously, this provides us with the opportunity to explain how and why their care is not affected since we would not

make the false economies of the black market, indeed stressing how the costs of care are very real in upholding high standards and not cutting corners.

With the best will in the world we can all be caught out by the crafty salesperson and the slick delivery. All people make mistakes but wise ones make them only once. What we can and should do it to ensure that we exercise as much diligence as we can in sourcing practice requirements. A well respected supplier with a history of good service is unlikely to offer 'dodgy' goods; an otherwise unknown website offering equipment at rock bottom prices shipped from abroad has to raise questions of legitimacy that any practitioner with common sense will avoid.

The BDA helps members in this task by having a variety of long-standing checks and standards. While we print various disclaimers about the content of our publications, including the authorship of the papers, every display advert is individually checked and passed before acceptance. It is of great credit to our advertisers that it is very rare indeed that we reject one; but sometimes we do. Similarly, we have strict terms and conditions for exhibitors at the British Dental Conference and Exhibition. Such safeguards can never by their nature be absolute but in protecting members as far as possible we hope to eliminate any chances of fakes or counterfeits making an ingress into the system. In such situation the epithet 'buyer beware' is often quoted. Being really picky I'd like to promote the thought of 'buyer be aware'. Real advice in a counterfeit context.

1. Hancocks S. Editorial. *The artfulness of the fake*. *Br Dent J* 2015; **218**: 317.

