

# ***British Dental Health Foundation – Better oral health for all***

President of the British Dental Health Foundation, **Janet Goodwin**

**T**he role of president of the British Dental Health Foundation comes with some amazing opportunities and responsibilities to help influence the state of everyone's oral health, all of which I am excited and eager to face head on.

At the very top of the agenda for my term as the charity's president is to try and make good quality, trustworthy and accurate dental health information available to anyone who wants it. I believe this will help to relieve some of the dental anxiety that still is far too widespread in society and go a long way to address the level of tooth decay in the UK.

I want to help make visiting the dentist something people don't worry about and feel safe and comfortable doing by increasing their own knowledge.

The Foundation works tirelessly to provide reliable and trusted information to all through the Dental Helpline, social media, press and campaigns. For decades they have helped countless people and organisations to improve the quality of their oral health and that is what I am hoping to build upon. One of the most exciting areas that I will oversee during my presidency is to explore new possibilities to increase and improve our global identity to try and help more people than ever before.

Our globally renowned 'Tell Me About' information is now available online in ten languages, making our information accessible to millions more globally, and this is just the beginning of something very special.

## **National Smile Month**

This year (16 May–16 June) marks a landmark for National Smile Month as the campaign celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. The campaign has grown and developed into its own global brand and is now one of the key landmarks of the dental industry calendar.

This year the campaign will be larger than ever and we hope it will facilitate thousands of grassroots activities such as fun days, talks,

sponsored events, road-shows, displays, open sessions and competitions – all which have the ultimate goal of engaging people in the importance of oral health.

At the British Dental Health Foundation we are extremely proud of what National Smile Month has achieved while the number of individuals and organisations that get involved is amazing. With their support we are able to spread good oral health messages to millions of people.

But we want to go even further. This year, with the industry's support, we want to celebrate the campaign's birthday with a huge party and engage more people, helping to show that the campaign really does make a significant difference by improving the oral health of those most at need.

## **Mouth Cancer Action Month**

In November our other major campaign takes centre stage. Mouth Cancer Action Month will once again take over dental practices across the country to help raise awareness of mouth cancer and make a difference by saving thousands of lives through early detection and prevention.

As long-time campaigners for mouth cancer, I am delighted to say that everybody at the Foundation remains passionate and committed to increasing awareness of the disease and reducing the number of lives lost to it every year.

In 2015, the campaign was the biggest ever and cemented itself as an influential springboard for making a difference in the fight against mouth cancer. But with recent statistics showing cases of mouth cancer are still seeing a significant increase there is a greater need than ever to bring the whole industry together to spread awareness even further.

## **Better oral health for all**

One of the main problems which I see today is a shortage of NHS dentistry in certain areas of the country. Some people are not able to access quality care which is convenient and affordable to them; this can put them off visiting the dentist altogether and means those who may need it the



most are not getting the care and support they require. This is something that I hope to highlight as a matter of urgency.

The availability of drinks and confectionery with high sugar content is also a major problem; this is especially the case when it comes to children's dental health where nearly half of eight year olds have visible signs of decay in their teeth. This is a major health issue in the UK that needs to be addressed urgently; I believe that the introduction of a 'sugar-tax' would be a hugely beneficial step

For many people there is still a lot of fear attached to the prospect of going to the dentist, which within modern dentistry is unnecessary. Too many people relate going to the dentist with being in pain which is a lot of the problem. Modern dentistry is in fact pain free and there is far more of a focus on preventative treatments to stop pain occurring in the first instance. I want to help people to understand this.

I would also like the public to recognise the importance of their teeth for eating and speaking rather than wanting perfect brilliant white teeth to look like celebrities.

Finally, in my role as president I hope to use my experience and knowledge to help steer the trustees of the British Dental Health Foundation to make informed decisions on the direction of the charity, and show how they can use their influence to help further enhance public experiences, information and knowledge of dental issues and best practices.

We as a charity will continue tirelessly in our role in helping to provide better oral health for all.

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