Evolution: How far can we go, ask dental therapists

The new chair of the British Association of Dental Therapists **Debbie Hemington** provides an overview of the 2018 conference.

With the theme Evolution: How far can we go, our 2018 conference kicked off in Oxford with record numbers of attendees. Student sponsorship secured by our new President, Debbie McGovern, meant that we had nearly 40 students swelling the ranks.

The main programme began with Eric Rooney, Deputy Chief Dental Officer for England, talking us through contract reform and the vision for the NHS in the future. The most interesting fact we discovered is that Eric is married to a dental therapist! He spoke about the increased use of therapists in the new contract and hopefully we have a real ally in him!

Laura Gartshore, a Paediatric Consultant from the University of Liverpool described how the Dental Check by One (#DCby1) was launched and the momentum it had gained through widespread exposure in both social and mainstream media.

She also highlighted the work done by Liverpool City Council in launching the website

savekidsfromsugar.co.uk which has brilliant resources for downloading both for parents and your waiting room, go and check it out! (Fuller coverage of Laura's presentation on page ?)

Fiona Sandom and Michaela O'Neill brought us up to date on the campaign to be able to prescribe certain medications and products, such as fluoride varnish and local anaesthetic, otherwise known as the exemptions campaign. They have been heading up the process in a joint project between our association and BSDHT and have put hours and hours of work into it. They have made a case for dental therapists to be able to prescribe. It's a long slow process but well underway. Things are looking promising but you can never be certain until you get the final results!

They were followed by John Makin, head of the Dental Defence Union (DDU), who gave us a down to earth look at handling complaints. A lot of his advice centred around preventing a complaint in the first place, and most importantly, not "over promising" what you can deliver to patients. He defined a complaint as "an expression of dissatisfaction that requires a

response" and he told us that saying sorry was not an admission of any wrong doing and goes a long way to appeasing an unhappy patient.

Nik Sethi started the afternoon off with a presentation on trauma and the role a therapist could play if they are the first person a patient sees in the practice. He had fabulous slides of some amazing composite work he had done in trauma cases and talked us through how he had done it.

Nik was followed by Professor St John Crean from UCLAN, who told us about his exciting work looking at a potential link between periodontal disease and Alzheimers. Professor Avi Banerjee was the last main speaker of the day, with a look at minimally invasive preventive dentistry. As always he was an enthralling

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speaker and challenged some of our traditional thinking. He highlighted his MI MSc at Kings which Dental Therapists are welcome to apply for, and there are some scholarships and funding if you are interested. The AGM followed for BADT members, and saw Debbie McGovern installed as our new President and I was installed as Chair.

On Saturday, Mark Platt, policy manager at the GDC talked to us about eCPD, PDPs and the thinking behind the change from the old style CPD. Following this, the rest of the morning was a series of rotational workshops where the delegates moved round every 45 minutes in a "speed dating" style. During these workshops, delegates could try bulkfill composite courtesy of Dentsply, splint an anterior tooth with Nik Sethi and Optident, learn about implant maintenance with EMS, try out Hall Crowns with Fiona Sandom and 3M or start off their PDP with Jane Dalgarno!

The conference closed with thanks to everyone for coming, to all the speakers and workshop coordinators and to the trade for their very generous support. Feedback is already highlighting what a great event it was and what a fabulous atmosphere prevailed all weekend.

Debbie qualified as a Dental Therapist in 1983 at New Cross (the year it closed down) and as a Dental Hygienist at Kings College Dental Institute in 1987 and has wide ranging experience in community, hospital and general practice settings. She currently combines working in practice with teaching at The Eastman Dental Hospital and also running post graduate courses. She was recently elected Chair of BADT.

bdjteam2018208