

BOOK REVIEW

100 Years of Women in the Dental Profession in the UK, 1918-2018

Janine Brooks
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Dr Janine Brooks' recent publication delves into the world of women in dentistry, exploring with statistics the progress women have made spanning 100 years in the profession. This book also showcases beautifully women in dentistry, from dentists to hygienists and dental nurses. It's a wonderfully uplifting examination of existing female role models and paints an overall positive image of our workforce. The key messages Dr Brooks is keen to highlight is rather than homing in on women achieving as much as men, the focus should be on working collaboratively to achieve greater successes. This book also serves to remind us of the importance of mentorship and a portfolio career.

Key findings

Gender equality and diversity are very high profile and topical themes that continue to gather great momentum in the 21st century. In the world of dentistry, despite great advances, women were not able to attend dinners at the Royal College of Surgeons until 1984! The statistics show a more even playing field for women than ever before. Looking at the end of 2017

statistics, 49% on the GDC register were female, 42% specialists predominantly in Dental Public Health, Oral Microbiology, Paediatric Dentistry and Special Care Dentistry. There appear to still be certain specialities that are less popular for women dentists; Endodontics, Oral Medicine, Oral Surgery, Periodontics, Prosthodontics and Restorative Dentistry.

The BDA produced a useful comparison between male and female members in general practice, with practice ownership aspiration only 9% compared to 18% men. The morale as a dentist appeared to be higher and fewer expressed the intention to leave the NHS. When looking at dentists working in the community, 79% of the workforce was female. There is near gender balance in dental clinical academic roles: an increase from 32% 10 years ago.

With regards to heading dental organisations, women continue to play an ever increasingly crucial role. In 2018, the president of the BDA was Dr Susie Sanderson OBE and in 2019 Roslyn McMullen, the sixth woman to hold that prestigious position.

Female role models and the role of mentoring

I enjoyed reading the interviews of inspiring female dental professionals. I particularly enjoyed learning about their influential mentors and most memorable achievements in their profession.

Mentoring plays an often integral part in the success of dental professionals and so I was happy to see an emphasis on this aspect throughout the interviews. This will come as no surprise to those who follow Janine Brooks. She is an experienced coach and trainer for dental coaches. Learning more on the significance of mentoring is particularly key

for young dentists but also a worthwhile reminder for more experienced dentists, as the support mentoring can offer can really propel a career. Learning more on portfolio careers is also a key theme that runs through many of these interviews. As a dental profession, it can be very easy and short-sighted of us to get stuck and bored in one area of dentistry. Janine Brooks excellently presents for the case for exploring the many roles a dental profession can take. Every example of women in the book illustrated a very interesting career and spanning various roles. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why these women remain so passionate and driven.

Predictions for the future

Janine's predictions for the future of dentistry are very interesting. She predicts that new technologies and scientific advances in the profession will result in growing teeth using stem cell technology rather than implants, crowns bridges or dentures. Childcare responsibilities would be shared evenly between men and women. New specialities would be born. Portfolio careers would be a more often occurrence, as well as changing careers. Training of dental professionals would look very different, with a greater emphasis on climbing frame education rather than single stream training. The number of hours and patterns of work would no longer be relevant, rather the quality of hours spent. It certainly looks like the future of dentistry can be exciting and evolving.

Verdict

I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. I would recommend it to anyone interested in learning more on the history of women in dentistry, the progression over time and anyone keen to learn more on lessons learnt by inspirational, empowered women. To create a bigger vision, we must be able to see examples of success. This is why books, such as this one, are so integral in lifting women up, furthering the conversations around gender equality and diversity and inspiring future women of dentistry to keep reaching for the stars.

By Mahrukh Khwaja

