

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Better opportunities for women dentists: Dame Margaret Seward

It is exactly 20 years since Margaret Seward took the lead in championing the contribution of women dentists to the dental workforce through the publication, commissioned by the Department of Health, *Better opportunities for Women Dentists* (2001). It considered the issues in the contexts of General Practice, Community and Hospital Dental Services and Academic Dentistry.

Dame Margaret states in the Foreword that her aim was for her recommendations to be acted upon promptly. It is interesting, 20 years on and as a tribute to the significant role that Dame Margaret played within the profession generally but for women dentists in particular, to reflect on her recommendations, namely:

- The availability of flexible and part-time working patterns
- Retraining and returning after a career break and childcare initiatives
- Support towards practice ownership
- Necessary changes in relation to workforce planning
- Encouragement for women to take on leadership roles.

There has been a significant demographic shift within the dental workforce towards women and the enhancement of their opportunities, for example, maternity rights have improved enormously since this report was commissioned.

Nevertheless, I found it interesting that, some 20 years later in 2021, the BDA found it 'newsworthy' to state that 3 contemporary women presidents are/or will be women. Moreover, within the same publication, it reported that there had been difficulties during Covid in fitting masks on women practitioners, as the masks had been designed for male features.<sup>1</sup>

The profession has moved a long way since 2001: no longer would a woman be asked if she was on the 'pill' as happened to me all those years ago when I applied for a bank loan to set up my practice, but there is still a way to go.

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### Reference

1. Westgarth D. Women in specialty training: Challenges, decisions, or opportunities?. *BDJ In Pract* 2021; **34**: 18-22.

## Dentists' option to pay ARF by instalments now open to sign up

Dentists can now sign up to pay their Annual Retention Fee (ARF) by instalments, following the successful introduction of the scheme for dental care professionals (DCP) earlier this year.

The General Dental Council introduced the new pay by instalments option to support dental professionals who pay their own fee by enabling them to spread the cost over the year. For dentists, this is four Direct Debits of £170.

To take advantage of the option this year, dentists need to log in to eGDC and select the quarterly Direct Debit option no later than 31 October 2021.

GDC Chief Operating Officer, Gurvinder Soomal, said: 'We are pleased to be able to offer this increased flexibility to professionals around how they pay their ARF.'

Where dentists hold specialist titles, the annual fee of £72 per title will also be collected in the first Direct Debit. For further information visit the GDC's Pay by instalments Direct Debit webpage.

## BSPD welcomes new President



Professor Sondos Albadri, Professor and Honorary Consultant in Paediatric Dentistry in Liverpool, has been announced as the new President of the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD).

Professor Albadri is and one of the most respected names in paediatric dentistry. Her inauguration will take place on 5 October, at BSPD's annual conference.

It's tradition that the President tours all BSPD's branches during their year in office and delivers a lecture reflecting on their career and academic interests. Professor Albadri's topic is '2021 vision: A new perspective on hindsight' and she will reflect on her career, on the management

of childhood trauma and on the lessons learned from the pandemic.

She said: 'We now live with the threat of a pandemic and prevention has never been so important. The hindsight we have acquired post pandemic should underpin our work going forward and as President I want to build on what that means for us and for our patients.'

One of the impacts of the pandemic has been to highlight the degree to which children from deprived areas are disadvantaged by poor oral health. Another priority for Professor Albadri will be to support initiatives which help reduce growing inequalities in children's oral health.

Prof Albadri is, among many other roles, Clinical Lead for the University of Liverpool's Institute of Life Course and

Medical Sciences (ILCaMS). She has become involved in research exploring the link between oral health and chronic inflammatory conditions in children. She said: 'This is about collaborating to understand the science behind inflammatory diseases and understanding that the mouth is gateway to the body.'

Since her young days in Baghdad, Prof Albadri knew she wanted to be an academic, but she did not believe she could ever become a Professor. How wrong she was! She rose rapidly to the top of the academic ladder in paediatric dentistry in the UK, becoming a Professor at the age of 43.

In the year ahead, she looks forward to inspiring younger paediatric dentists, making sure that they know that they can succeed, as she has done.