



Who needs an editor?



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Last month I made the bi-annual pilgrimage to Cologne for the 40th iteration of the International Dental Show (IDS) which, besides being off-the-scale enormous, is always a real ey opener for what we can expect to see in UK dentistry in the years to come.

It's a cycle that's vaguely reminiscent of my tendency to wait a little while for the latest 'fad' to blow over before dipping my toe in. *Game of Thrones* was a classic example. I waited until season 5 before binge-watching the thing, engaging in superfast catch up, only to be left behind by virtue of new seasons and being behind on discussions and catch-ups.

It's a metaphor that works for the majority of UK dentistry – for some reason, the things presented at IDS take their time to filter down to our industry. All except one.

ChatGPT, also mentioned in this issue, did plenty of the legwork for presenters and speakers. It's a novel tool, and one that I'm going to dive right into on the upwards part of the curve. Here follows *ChatGPT4's* response when I asked it 'what does the future of UK dentistry look like?'

As an AI language model, I don't have access to current or future government policies, but I can provide some general information and trends regarding dentistry in the UK.

In the UK, dental services are provided through a combination of private and NHS dental practices. Patients can choose to receive their dental care either through an NHS practice or a private practice. NHS practices are typically more affordable, but may have longer waiting times for appointments, while private practices offer more personalised care and faster access to treatment, but at a higher cost.

One of the significant changes in UK dentistry has been the increasing privatisation of dental services. Since 2006, the NHS dental services in the UK have been operating on a contract basis, and this has resulted in fewer NHS practices and more private dental clinics.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had a significant impact on UK dentistry, with many practices closed or offering only limited services during lockdowns. As the UK continues to deal with the pandemic, dental practices are adjusting to new infection control protocols, including the use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and enhanced cleaning and disinfection procedures.

In the longer term, there are likely to be ongoing challenges for the dental profession in the UK, including workforce shortages and increasing patient demand for cosmetic treatments. In terms of job prospects, dentistry remains a highly respected and in-demand profession in the UK, with strong demand for dental services and a shortage of qualified dental professionals in some areas. According to the NHS, there is an ongoing need for dentists in the UK, particularly in rural and remote areas. However, technological advances

in dental treatments and digital dentistry may also present new opportunities for practitioners and patients.

Overall, the future of UK dentistry will depend on a range of factors, including government policies, funding models, and advancements in technology and research.'

Sigh. Does anyone need an editor? I'm available for commissions at a reasonable price, and, unlike machines, am a sociable beast.

Not so fast.

While this model of artificial intelligence is developing at a rate of knots – and is learning on the job, one of the biggest takeaways from IDS was the balance of AI integration into the industry and everyday practice. Can it ever be 100%? Is that safe? Should it be 50%, but in which case are we fully utilising its potential?

The phrase that resonated with me was 'assisted intelligence'. People will still be needed to oversee the implementation of AI. It's inevitable some jobs will become automated in the future – it would be foolish to believe otherwise. The successful practices, I heard, will be the ones who strike the right balance. Take *ChatGPT4's* response, for example. It can't generate an answer out of thin air – it still needed my input.

Which, hurrah, means this here editor won't be replaced by a machine anytime soon. However, those who do not adopt AI will be left behind by those who do, and from what I saw and heard in Cologne, the clock is already ticking for some. ♦

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