

A WELCOME FROM THE NEW BDA PRESIDENT, RUSS LADWA

As an undergraduate, I was a struggling student. In fact, I failed my first year exams and had to re-sit. Not letting one stumble stop me, I learnt my lesson, focused and worked much harder during the subsequent clinical years. The result? Upon graduation two different departments were vying to have me as their 'house surgeon'.

I am grateful to have this opportunity to address fellow students. I still consider myself a student too, despite having started my training over 50 years ago, as I learn something new every day, whether it is about dentistry, technology or just life! I am sure it is this life-long learning that keeps me motivated and justifies me to be called a 'professional' person.

'We have to keep positive and remain healthy in mind and body ourselves if we hope to help others.'

I was asked if there is any advice I can give you. In truth, the answer is no! Instead, I prefer to share some of my journey with all its ups and downs, some of which may strike a chord. Academically you had to work much harder than me with all your 'A stars' as opposed to my mere Cs to get into dental school.

Having been a student BDA member like you, I first actively became involved with the BDA at section level when I felt isolated after starting my own practice in 1977. I was warmly welcomed and fast-tracked there and at the Local Dental Committee – both were the vital beginning of my career in dental matters. All these outside interests take time and commitment, but I enjoyed them all thoroughly as I always like to be a participant rather than an observer, a player than a spectator. My experience is that by showing a genuine interest and asking the right questions, there were always some good



people to guide me in the right direction.

I genuinely feel for you all concerning the effects of COVID-19 and the ongoing pandemic-related restrictions on your training and the ramifications to follow. My consolation to you is that this is a global challenge affecting every man woman and child and not just you or me. I am sure the state, the universities and the profession led by the BDA will continue to monitor and do their best to help you overcome some of the current difficulties as things get better. We have to keep positive and remain healthy in mind and body ourselves if we hope to help others.

I have also been following the issues of racial discrimination and inequalities reported by some students. This is a matter of huge concern to me personally and the BDA. My own heartfelt word to you is I have had first-hand experience of most of what is reported. My deep frustration is that it is still going on. I will be failing in my duty to those so affected if I did not speak up during my year as President. My message is 'stay strong, persevere and never give up; but always do the right thing'. In my case, I have always stood up for fairness and justice everywhere. The BDA has set up a new Equalities Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee to focus on these matters in which I hope to be fully involved on your behalf.

My main and proud job title is still a general dental practitioner. I have always done all I have enjoyed, without concern to income, status or fame, ending up with some amazing opportunities to engage with so many professional bodies during a very satisfying career, unimaginable in my wildest dreams at graduation. You too can all attain great heights, so do not limit yourselves. You have my best wishes

Russ Ladwa, President, BDA ■

Dental foundation training: change to preferencing timelines announced

Health Education England and the National Recruitment Office for DFT (for England, Northern Ireland and Wales) have announced that the preferencing of dental schemes will be delayed until the spring of 2021. Under normal circumstances, preferencing would have started on 8 December 2020.

Applicants and training practices should have received communications from the DFT National Recruitment Office (NRO).

The change is due to the ongoing considerations about dental graduation timelines in 2021 caused by the effects of the pandemic on clinical training for the current year group. The Dental Schools Council (DSC) and individual dental schools are in communication with the GDC to look at the arrangements for graduation in 2021. The situation is likely to be much clearer in the first few months of 2021.

It is hoped that as many students as possible will graduate to begin Dental Foundation Training in September. In order to support students who may require an extension of clinical training in order to meet the requirements of their course, there is a possibility that there may be two start dates for dental foundation training: one in Sept 2021 and one in the first quarter of 2022, to ensure that those students whose undergraduate training may be extended do not have to wait until September 2022 to begin DFT.

The NRO understands that there are many unknowns at present and that this is a difficult year for applicants and training practices. The underlying intention of this delay to preferencing and the consideration around providing DFT in September 2021 and in early 2022 is the wish to support all dental students, training practices and dental schools through a situation that is uncertain, variable and difficult to plan for in detail until some of the necessary processes and numbers are clearer.

The above approach is not applicable to the arrangements for DFT in Scotland, which has a separate system.