

MEET YOUR NEW *BDJ STUDENT* READER PANEL FOR 2023

As you know, **Imran Yaqoub** was selected earlier in the year as the new student editor of *BDJ Student*. However, alongside Imran's excellent submission were a host of other high-quality articles, and *BDJ Student* is delighted to introduce you to its new reader panel for 2023 – as well as their first articles for the publication.



The cosmetic dentistry rush

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The dynamic nature of healthcare positions dentistry as an ever-evolving career stream. Universities gear students up to dive into a profession which will have developed dramatically in the four, five, or six years they have spent working towards registration. And in a time of seemingly exponential scientific, technological, and social change, the dental world we enter as students seems to be shifting beneath our feet.

Dentistry has washed away its brutalist barber surgeon past, and at the confluence of science, the arts, and dexterity, professionals have inherited their place alongside their medical counterparts. Moving through paternalism and business models to a patient-centred approach, it is undeniable that social themes have a great influence on trends in dental care. Cosmetic dentistry is the first to slowly seep from the safe bounds of our profession and into the realm of virality.

With aesthetically-driven treatment outside the scope of practice of NHS dentistry, burdens of body dysmorphia and media pressure opened the floodgates to high-risk, low-cost alternatives for patients. Regulated provisions of teeth whitening were the first compromised, a simultaneous target of illegal practice¹ and do-it-yourself products: *Amazon* alone offers over 2000 products, starting at just £1.75. As technology developed, celebrity endorsements and social attitudes followed, as we entered the era of the dental 'makeover'. And so emerged explosive news articles and *TikTok* videos sharing the traumatic experiences of maximally destructive dental treatment – now a budget-friendly holiday add-on.²

Whilst advancements in technology are

a testament to the evidence which dentistry relies upon, it is clear that patients have followed the torrent of updates in real time. Social media, the central driving force, also runs the progression of our profession. As a generation built around these platforms, it is no surprise that our online portfolios are a massive focus for the construction of our professional identities. But the networking benefits are accompanied by inflated patient expectations and monitoring, another slowly brewing aspect of litigation pressure in practice.

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Ultimately, the most painstaking outcome of our cosmetic rebrand appears as the loss of needs-based, biological care in our perception by the patient population.

In reality, we are seeing the diversification of dentistry, and this is exactly what fulfils its niche. The recently updated Scope of Practice of dental hygiene therapists³ places emphasis on the effective delivery of biological, preventative care to a diverse patient profile. Continuous integration of the social sciences implements values-based, person-centred care to treat individual patients, not caricatures of social groups. The private endeavour of cosmetic dentistry attracts and celebrates artistry within our workforce, addressing the psychological basis of our impact.

The dental profession, in line with the true nature of healthcare, is an iceberg. It appears to the layperson as a trending news topic or scientific discovery, its floating form

shaped by the interactions of laypeople and the media. Its surface exists within an echo chamber, with the rare interjection from a well-polished professional themselves. As dental students, we have the privilege of objectivity, exploring and critiquing a colossal research base which remains undetected by our patients. Considering the increasing social relevance of dentistry, we hold the power to become multi-disciplinary educators, and re-establish our role as holistic healthcare providers.

References

1. General Dental Council. Illegal tooth whitening. Online information available at: <https://www.gdc-uk.org/standards-guidance/information-for-patients-public/tooth-whitening-and-illegal-practice/am-i-working-legally/illegal-tooth-whitening> (Accessed March 2023).
2. British Dental Association. Dental tourism: Patients need to know the risks. Online information available at: <https://bda.org/news-centre/latest-news-articles/Pages/dental-tourism-patients-need-to-know-the-risks.aspx> (Accessed March 2023).
3. NHS England. Building dental teams: Supporting the use of skill mix in NHS general dental practice – long guidance. January 2023. Available online at: www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/building-dental-teams-supporting-the-use-of-skill-mix-in-nhs-general-dental-practice-long-guidance/ (accessed July 2023).

Getting to know you

- *Cats or dogs?* Cats. They're affectionate, low-maintenance, and a little bit mysterious - what more could you want from a pet?
- *Favourite ice cream?* Any flavour with caramel is always a hit with me.
- *Guilty pleasure TV show?* Classic Sunday cooking shows.
- *Does pineapple belong on pizza?* It most certainly does not.
- *You want to become a dentist because...* Dentistry is an amalgamation of different disciplines: art and social sciences, physics and ethics, business and public health. Integrating all of these concepts in a patient-centred environment is truly fascinating!