

New EDI Committee co-chairs



Ellie Heidari

Ellie Heidari and Lauren Harrhy have been newly elected co-chairs of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC).

Lauren qualified from Cardiff in 2009 and has worked full time as a GDP in Wales ever since. She bought her practice, Sparkle Dental Centre, in 2017 and became a Foundation Trainer in 2020. Lauren's focus for the past few years has been on



Lauren Harrhy

helping to maintain the mental health of dental professionals. In addition to co-chairing EDIC, she is also on various other BDA committees as a representative.

Ellie is a specialist in special care dentistry and is currently working at King's College London, Faculty of Dentistry, Oral & Craniofacial Sciences (FoDOCS) and the Department of Sedation and Special Care Dentistry at Guy's Hospital. Her research

that advocates for vulnerable people has been widely published and has gained media attention. She has contributed and drawn from a variety of experiences as a champion of EDI in different organisations in primary and secondary care.

Speaking on her election, Ellie said: 'It is an exciting time to be working and collaborating with colleagues to build on the existing valuable EDI work to create a future where colleagues are included and feel that they belong, irrespective of where they are working and contributing to improve the population's oral health.'

Lauren said: 'I am incredibly happy to be able to share the Chairing duties of EDIC with Ellie, we share many of the same views, and are both looking forward to building on the work that the committee has already done.'

'I am determined that the work of EDIC will inform the advice and support that we can give throughout the organisation and membership, ensuring that those who are in most need of representation will have their issues heard and addressed.'

Smile Club collapse: It shouldn't have taken a bankruptcy to protect patients

The British Dental Association has warned that the collapse of remote-orthodontic giant SmileDirectClub will not close the door on the clear risks to patients presented by remote orthodontics.

The business model – offering patients plastic aligners based on a 3D scan of their mouths or via an impression taken from at-home moulding kits – can lead to fundamental changes to a patient's mouth that may be irreversible.

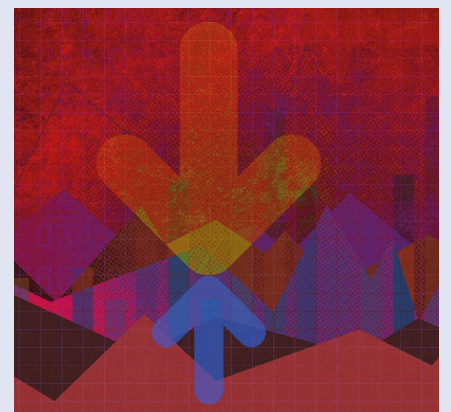
The BDA has regularly raised concerns directly with regulators – the Care Quality Commission and General Dental Council – about this practice since 2019. The professional body warn that the bankruptcy of the market leader should not be viewed as a substitute for meaningful regulation to protect patients.

In 2021 the GDC published guidelines, stressing that orthodontic patients need

to be fully assessed by a dentist, that direct dentist-to-patient interaction – the basis for informed consent – is essential, and that patients must know the name and registration number of the dentist responsible for their care. However, it did not offer any clarity on what sanctions it might utilise and how the regulator backed up its assumption that such models of care are 'safe for many people.'

Dentists have stressed the risk of misdiagnosis and lack of informed consent in the absence of face-to-face consultations throughout the course of treatment. The BDA has seen cases of patients with advanced gum disease that have been provided with these aligners, potentially leading to tooth loss.

In 2020 an investigation into the provider by U.S. network NBC revealed a wide range of complaints on treatment outcomes. Patients were not required to have any in-person assessment with a dentist, and



unhappy customers were made to sign non-disclosure agreements.

British Dental Association Chair Eddie Crouch said: 'Dentists are left to pick up the pieces when these providers offer wholly inappropriate treatment. It shouldn't have taken a bankruptcy to protect patients from harm. It requires decent laws and effective regulation. Sooner or later, someone will find a way to make remote orthodontics turn a profit. Before that time proper safeguards must be in place.'