Ed's letter

Welcome to the October issue of *BDJ Team*. Although the COVID-19 pandemic is very much still 'in the air', this month our cover feature focuses on dental therapists and how to make the most of direct access. Direct access - seeing patients without referral from a dentist - was brought in following consultation by the GDC in 2013. Cat Edney, a dental therapist and member of our reader panel, explains what direct access is, why dental care professionals (DCPs) would work in this way, and the different working structures that are possible. Cat also includes case studies for a number of dental therapists she spoke to while writing the article who are making direct access work for them. Contrary to what some might think, all of them have close working relationships with dentists, despite working under direct access.

Regular writer Laura Marshall looks at dental therapy from a different angle: addressing the public perception of a dental therapist, and the misconceptions in general. The confusion is not just on the part of the public, either. Laura includes quotes from a dental student and a dentist who have foggy notions of what a dental therapist actually does.

Laura hopes that the profile and role of the dental therapist will become more widely known and appreciated in the future.

Also this month, our CPD article looks at clinical audit for the dental team and Noor Al-Helou provides a guide on how to answer patients' questions on smoking cessation and e-cigarettes. Caroline Holland explores the initiatives and people making a difference to children's oral health - in a challenging year like no other.

As practices continue to work in unprecedented conditions, DCPs at award-winning New Road Dental Practice in Bromsgrove describe their experiences, and hospital Mouthcare Lead Loraine Lee describes in vivid detail her pandemic experience, redeployed to help staff on the frontline, working long hours in the ICU and having to acquire a plethora of new skills. The final *BDJ Team* of this year will focus on all things higher education: what is available and how you might secure a place on a course; and how education providers are adapting their course delivery during the pandemic.

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THE TEAM

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With thanks to Cat Edney

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