COMMENT

Letters to the editor

Send your letters to the Editor, *British Dental Journal*, 64 Wimpole Street, London, W1G 8YS. Email bdj@bda.org. Priority will be given to letters less than 500 words long. Authors must sign the letter, which may be edited for reasons of space.

Animal care

Fun incident

Sir, the recent *BDJ* cover with the diver cleaning the shark's teeth reminded me of a fun incident I had at our local zoo, Marwell Zoo, a few years ago.

I spent the day as a keeper, working in many different zones of the park, finishing with supper time for the big cats.

One of their male Amur tigers was due to be sedated with a dart as it had cracked off the tips of its lower canines. The keepers still had no idea of my normal work as a dentist and then the accompanying picture happened.

I had just served the tiger his supper and he very kindly opened really wide for me to examine all his teeth – it is more likely that he was unhappy to have me next to him and so thank goodness for the strong bars between us.

I was then able to notice that the enamel was intact and the teeth mirrored each other, indicating that the tips had simply not

formed properly rather than having broken off. This was a great relief for the keepers but it did mean that I had spoiled that young male tiger's fun as he was now out of any breeding programme.

C. Marks, Southampton, UK, by email

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Christmas

Christmas chuckles

Sir, to say I enjoyed your Editorial in the pre-Christmas issue is an understatement, but my enjoyment of your spoof letters page and other copy which followed brought tears (of laughter) to my eyes. Superb writing.

Many congratulations are due in bringing a bit of levity to our often difficult job and sour current world. I am sure that your readership will agree.

I did have two concerns – the first is that my paper (with Steve Lucarotti) which followed only a few pages after your entertainment

section might also be taken by readers as a joke – which it was not intended to be, and the second is that you did not incorporate into the ode to the carious tooth a couple of lines something like: 'If we didn't have caries, all we would be doing is cleaning teeth.'

Keep up the good work!

F. J. Trevor Burke, Birmingham, UK, by email

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Indemnity

Indemnity cover for dentists and staff

Sir, I was surprised to read in the January 11 edition of the *BDJ* that both the BDA¹ and Dental Protection Ltd.² appear to be supportive of the government's proposal to legislate for insurance-based indemnity cover for primary care dentists and others.

With such warm noises emanating from these bodies it isn't hard to see why the Department of Health & Social Care's consultation document³ is less about whether or not to introduce insurance-based indemnity (the preferred option in the consultation), and more about seeking respondents' opinions on how this change – apparently almost a foregone conclusion – will be brought about.

Both the BDA and the government acknowledge that there is little, if any, evidence that patients are being poorly served by the existing indemnity system though much is being made of the fact that currently indemnifiers can refuse to settle claims on behalf of clients.

On the rare occasions when this has happened in the past, there is usually evidence of criminal activity by the client and, as anyone who has ever owned a car, house, or pedigree pet knows, criminal activity is a get-out clause in all types of insurance policies. So no change there.

Apart from increased premiums and the opportunity to pay more Insurance Premium Tax there seems to be little to recommend

C. Marks at Marwell Zoo