EDITORIAL

Fifteen

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Editor-in-Chief

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You are forgiven if the significance of *BDJ* volume 197, number 12, cover date 25 December 2004 passed you by in the yuletide merrymaking those fifteen years ago. The world was diverted with matters other than the microcosmic management of a dental journal, amongst other more immediate concerns its eyes were turned, for example, with increasing distress to the loss of life in the Indian Ocean tsunami. In the UK Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II focussed in her Christmas broadcast on religious and cultural diversity and the benefits of a tolerant society. It is hardly profound to observe that some things change markedly and others merely differ in extent.

Things had changed markedly though at the BDA in 2004. A crisis had hit the Association's finances (we were blissfully unaware that a further fiscal furore was fermenting worldwide to emerge dramatically in 2008) and had caused some radical decisions to be made, including the future of the *BDJ*. Previously the journal editorial staff and functions were based at the BDA's headquarters at 64 Wimpole Street while the publishing arm was located at the (then) Nature Publishing Group's (NPG) offices (now Springer Nature) in King's Cross. Following discussion between the two organisations and as part of a rationalisation process, with regrettable but inevitable redundancies, the entire operation was relocated to NPG except for the newly created role of editor-in-chief, altered from full to part-time, which remained at the BDA.

Within dental and publishing circles there was general surprise and concern. The 'other' dental press, arguably much stronger in those days, made hay while the sun shined declaring that the BDA had sold the family silver to NPG and that nothing good would come of it. This despite the fact that the partnership was already eight years old. Many members of the editorial board resigned out of personal disagreement with the changes and the echoes of concern reverberated around the somewhat depleted

office festive decorations. Knowingly, acutely conscious of the privilege of being appointed editor-in-chief and tentatively, having very little clue how I might even begin to calm things down, I stepped into the maelstrom.

Volume 197, number 12 was therefore my 'first' issue. My sense of order has always been slightly jarred by this; volume 198 number 1 would have been far neater. But it was not a tidy situation and the juxtaposition of an editorial from the departing editor, Mike Grace and one from myself evidenced an appropriate symmetry. I had worked with Mike in various ways throughout his custodianship of the journal, much admired his editorial skills, acknowledged the important positive changes he had made and was saddened at the

an important international publisher has undoubtedly helped place us in the pole position nationally and internationally in which we now find ourselves.

In these intervening years we have embraced the digital revolution in stages by first publishing papers online only, shifting CPD to online and more recently creating a newcomer to the *BDJ* Portfolio, the online only open access journal *BDJ Open*. The portfolio itself has been given life during this time. Recognising the 'brand' that the letters *BDJ* had become gave us the strength to change the titles of three of the BDA's publications from *Launchpad*, *Vital* and *BDA News* to *BDJ Student*, *BDJ Team* and *BDJ In Practice* – a wonderful achievement for all

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circumstances of his leaving. In my editorial I emphasised the overwhelming sense of care that was being expressed at the time over not just the fate of the *BDJ* but also its status, quality and importance to the Association as well as a far wider audience that had begun to emerge with the growing influence of the internet. I pledged then that I would be 'taking care' and this I have attempted to do throughout these fifteen years since.¹

I have been aided and supported remarkably by teams at both the BDA and (now) Springer Nature. The subsequent value of the necessarily rapid and abrupt reorganisation in 2004 could not possibly have been foreseen. I suspect it would have been significant anyway but with the publishing developments, especially electronically, the partnership with such

involved and a huge asset for readers, authors, advertisers, owners and partners.

The list of changes, developments and improvements is long and the financial contribution of the publications to the BDA is substantial. A great deal has happened since 2004 but, as I acknowledged earlier, some things do not change. So it is with as genuine a goodwill now, as then, that I wish you a happy, healthy and prosperous Christmas and New Year and offer the reassurance that I will still be listening to you in 2020, and beyond, and I will be working with you and for you. But most of all I will be taking care. ■

References

1. Hancocks S. Taking care. *Br Dent J* 2004; **197**: 719. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-019-1113-x>