

Letters to the editor

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NHS dentistry

Recruitment and retention

Sir, within NHS dentistry, there is general national concern about the recruitment and retention of dental professionals. NHS dental practices are struggling to fill core clinical vacancies¹ which in consequence leaves an unacceptable number of patients unable to access routine NHS dental services.² There are access problems across every English region, however, these issues are amplified in rural or isolated areas such as Cornwall, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire and Norfolk² where patients face increased difficulty and travel even longer distances due to a shortage of dentists in the region.

East Anglia's Local Dental Network has made it a priority to improve recruitment and retention issues within its region, and one of the innovative ways we aim to achieve this, albeit with a long-term outlook, is by raising awareness of our profession at a 'grass roots level'. We aim to utilise dental foundation trainees (DFTs) and other dental professionals to connect with local schools and colleges via the 'Inspiring the Future'³ platform.

This platform enables dentists and other professionals to deliver presentations on their job role and highlight the many benefits as well as the fantastic opportunities within our amazing profession. Volunteers simply sign up online, create a profile, await an invitation, and reply to the school or educational establishment of their choice within their postcode.

By reaching out to local institutions in this manner, we hope that in the future, there will be a rise in the number of dentists that have grown up within the region, who in turn may be more likely to return to their roots in the area following completion of their training. Thus, this programme may assist in providing a solution over the long term to the recruitment and retention crisis this region has been experiencing, alongside other initiatives.

We feel that this would present a good opportunity for our profession to have interpersonal contact with the younger generation – which arguably ought to happen more often – and would be a good way for dentists to develop presentation, communication and networking skills.

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References

1. British Dental Association. 75% of NHS dental practices now struggling to fill vacancies. 16 March 2019. Available at: <https://bda.org/news-centre/press-releases/75-per-cent-of-nhs-dental-practices-now-struggling-to-fill-vacancies> (accessed November 2019).
2. British Dental Association. 1 million new patients unable to access NHS dentistry, as recruitment and retention crisis mounts. 2 February 2019. Available at: <https://bda.org/news-centre/press-releases/Pages/1-million-new-patients-unable-to-access-NHS-dentistry.aspx> (accessed November 2019).
3. Education and Employers. Inspiring the future. <https://www.inspiringthefuture.org/>. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-020-1204-8>

Dental technology

Let's CAD/CAM

Sir, we are fourth year dental students writing to you regarding the use of novel dental technologies to enhance dental teaching across the UK. The use of computer aided design and computer aided manufacturing (CAD-CAM) in general practice has increased considerably over the last decade, consistent with its technological progress. Personally, we were introduced to CAD-CAM at an early stage in our training, but it has come to our attention that companies such as Dentsply Sirona only visit some dental schools.

In our experience, they offered a complete interactive demonstration of CAD-CAM equipment, including how to use it. This demonstration was supplemented by a 'mini' competition whereby students prepared a tooth for a full gold crown and the student with the best preparation has the crown

milled by the CAD-CAM. Not only was this enjoyable for students, it also gave the class an opportunity to see the milling process live. This consolidated our knowledge of the CAD-CAM process. We were also able to appreciate the value of CAD-CAM as an effective tool in multidisciplinary management of a patient. It was intriguing to read a recent article by Antov and colleagues regarding the use of CAD/CAM technology in the management of toothwear.¹ It really highlighted how advances in dental technology can improve patient comfort and experience as well as incorporating the key principles of minimal interventional dentistry, consistent with the teaching we receive in restorative dentistry, and we strongly believe that we have benefitted from this experience.

Having been exposed to CAD-CAM and becoming familiar with it, we have gained a considerable amount of knowledge and confidence to be able to use it in future treatment of our own patients. Ultimately, we feel that this approach should be implemented across dental schools to enhance student learning and assist in providing clinical excellence translating to optimal patient care.

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References

1. Antov H, Jablonski R J, Keeling A, Nixon P. CAD/CAM techniques for the conservative and efficient management of tooth wear. *Br Dent J* 2019; **227**: 791-796. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-020-1212-8>

Oral microbiology

Breaking bad bugs with drugs

Sir, entering the third decade of the millennium, despite a drop in quinolone and cephalosporin use in the UK, 531.2 tonnes of antibiotics are consumed annually, dentists prescribing 5–7% (c.31.5 tonnes);^{1,2} the seventh most frequent is metronidazole (c.10.4 tonnes).³