

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.

Antibiotic prescribing

No room for complacency

Sir, I share Professor Martin Thornhill's relief (Research Insights: Author Q&A) that dental prescribing in England has significantly fallen since 2017,¹ and congratulate Public Health England and related organisations for their dental antibiotic stewardship campaign.² There is, however, no room for complacency and there needs to be sustained pressure on the government to provide properly funded, urgent treatment slots which allow time to appropriately treat dental infections. Writing a prescription for antibiotics and giving advice about analgesia is less time-consuming than providing operative treatment but in most cases is not in the best interests of the patient and will result in unnecessary antibiotic prescribing.

E. A. Field, Wirral, UK

References

1. Thornhill M H, Dayer M J, Durkin M J, Lockhart P B, Baddour L M. Dentists reduce antibiotic prescribing faster than medics from 2010 to 2017. *Br Dent J* 2019; **227**: 1044-1050.
2. Public Health England. Guidance: Dental antimicrobial stewardship: toolkit. 9 November 2016, last updated 16 July 2019. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/dental-antimicrobial-stewardship-toolkit> (accessed 24 February 2020).

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-020-1330-3>

Dental publishing

Beware predatory journals

Sir, following several months of arduous editing I recently had the pleasure of having my research published in the *BDJ*.¹ Since publication, I have received upwards of a dozen emails from various journals and organisations asking me to chair their conferences and publish my work in their online journals for a waived fee. Upon receiving the first email I was elated, by the third suspicious and by the seventh utterly dismayed. A points race is

rapidly developing between young dentists with ambitions of pursuing specialty training, with a publication now a 'must'. Online journals are preying on these individuals who are desperate to tick the box. A recent review by *Nature* has revealed that up to 60% of published articles have never been cited.² I would urge young dentists to resist the temptation of publishing with these predatory journals. Peer review can be a tumultuous process, but will result in your work being robust, rigorous and worthy of dissemination amongst colleagues. Alas, most things worth having are not easy.

A. Keogh, London, UK

References

1. Keogh A, Chadwick B. Health food blogger: friend or foe? *Br Dent J* 2019; **227**: 1051-1057.
2. Chawla D. Predatory-journal papers have little scientific impact. *Nature* 2020. Available at <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-00031-6> (accessed 24 February 2020).

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-020-1374-4>

How to get published

Sir, I am currently a DCT2 and am hoping to be accepted for a formal StR training programme in the next two years.

My colleagues and I have welcomed the changes to the specialty recruitment process and feel that it is very transparent and fair. The application criteria are clearly outlined on the person specifications, along with the points gained by meeting these criteria.¹ The process is highly competitive - in one specialty last year there were 120 applications for eight posts.

To stand out from the rest of the equally qualified dentists applying for further special training is near impossible, as the majority will have completed either the MFDS or MJDF, completed multiple audits and have several poster presentations. Hence, the difference between getting shortlisted or not heavily relies on points gained from publications and research.

It is very unlikely that any Foundation Dentist or DCT will be able to become actively involved in a research project as there are very limited opportunities, and the duration of most posts (6 to 12 months) precludes satisfactory completion to the level of publication. The main opportunities for publication arise from book reviews, letters and case reports and most journals now are very unwilling to publish case reports.

I would request that the *BDJ* would consider having a special section within the journal to include case reports to help and support young dentists who are wishing to undertake specialty training. I understand from discussions with colleagues that all dentists like reading case reports and gain valuable knowledge from them so I do not understand why journals do not feel they are beneficial and would welcome any comments.

There are lots of committed individuals who would excel in a multitude of different specialities who have been put off furthering their careers due to the difficulties of meeting an often unachievable application process.

M. Jackson, Liverpool, UK

The Editor-in-Chief responds: I thank Maria Jackson for her letter. We do publish case reports in the BDJ as case report letters and occasionally as items in their own right but on their merits rather than because they are from any particular cohort of authors. The main criterion we use in deciding is how valuable the cases might be to the readership. Many such submissions are either repetitive, and are already included in the dental literature (even if they seem 'unique' to the author), or the covering email begins with text such as '...this very rare case...' If it is a very rare then our viewpoint is that few readers are ever likely to be presented with such a case, and in that event they are likely to refer it for specialist advice and care.