

Diversity matters

Shaun Sellars continues this essential series on ethical dilemmas in dentistry which appears in every second issue of the *BDJ*.



The politics of representation has received renewed focus over recent years. The Everyday Sexism Project has been documenting examples of normalised sexism from around the world since 2012 and has ushered in a new wave of feminism. And it's been impossible to miss the recent surge of the Black Lives Matter movement, including the worldwide protests, political statements and inevitable misguided backlash. But how does dentistry relate to this?

According to the most recent GDC accounts,¹ the ratio of male to female registered dentists is almost exactly 1:1. This doesn't tell the whole story, with specific sectors of the profession often dominated by one gender. Women are significantly less likely to enter into implant dentistry or become practice owners, while men are underrepresented in community dentistry.² This, along with the part-time positions women often take up to accommodate child care roles, may go some way to explaining the gender pay gap of up to 39%.³

The issues are more profound than this, thanks to the male-led tradition of dentistry. When discussing the use of the title 'Dr' for dentists, one of my female friends remarked that 'it's OK for you... You don't get mistaken for the nurse.'

Dentistry is moving on from the 'pale, male and stale' stereotype but there are improvements to be made. The 'manel' (a conference/webinar or leadership panel made up solely of men) is still too common. Improving female representation is essential for providing differing viewpoints and solutions. This should be easy enough to resolve. I was on a panel at a science communication conference a few years ago where the organisers originally had a 'no manel' policy. They soon found that it was no longer needed because it soon became the new norm.

When it comes to ethnic diversity, the numbers are starker. Dentistry has a legacy of being a 'white' profession, and while

the profession is becoming ethnically more diverse, there are still significant issues. Around half of the dentists in the country are 'white' with the next most represented ethnic identity being 'Asian' or 'Asian British' echoing the ethnic mix of the country. But only 1% of registered dentists identify as being Black British⁴ which is a significant departure from the representation of 3% in the UK population.⁵ In addition, those of a BAME background are less likely to enter clinical teaching or academic roles.⁴

This matters because increasing representation encourages future participation. That is, women or BAME persons in a position will act as role models for future generations entering those positions. In a diverse society, diversity in dentistry is desirable, as it can remove barriers for access to unrepresented groups and help understand the unique challenges of overlooked patient cohorts. This is the basis of ethics: recognising yourselves in others makes treating others as yourself become second nature.

Why should a white, male, middle-class dentist (like me) be interested in any of this? Because we're the ones that can change it.

References

1. General Dental Council. *Annual Reports and Accounts 2019*. Available from: https://www.gdc-uk.org/docs/default-source/annual-reports/gdc-annual-report-and-accounts-2019.pdf?sfvrsn=4cd4c002_4 (accessed July 2020).
2. British Dental Association. *Women in Dentistry*. Available from: <https://bda.org/womenindentistry> (accessed July 2020).
3. Resume.io. *57 jobs dominated by women with the biggest gender pay gaps*. Available at <https://resume.io/blog/57-jobs-dominated-by-women-with-the-biggest-gender-pay-gap> (accessed July 2020).
4. Neville P. Exploring the ethnic diversity of UK dentistry. *MedEdPublish*. 2018; <https://doi.org/10.15694/mep.2018.0000055.1>.
5. Office of National Statistics. *Population of England and Wales*. Available at <https://www.ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk/uk-population-by-ethnicity/national-and-regional-populations/population-of-england-and-wales/latest> (accessed July 2020).

New date for North West study day

Due to COVID-19 the FGDP(UK) has had to reschedule its next Study Day. Originally planned for 13 November 2020, the event will now take place on Saturday 27 March 2021. The venue is still the stunning Science + Industry Museum, in the heart of Manchester, where delegates will be joined by speakers Ian Dunn and Serpil Djemal.

Ian Dunn is the Perio Lead for the Faculty of General Dental Practitioners and runs their short course in periodontics and leads the perio components of the FGDP Restorative Diploma. His sessions will focus on contemporary periodontal practice providing a modern understanding of aetiology, assessment and diagnosis, and looking at motivating patients to achieve high standards of home care to achieve non-surgical management of periodontal disease.

Serpil Djemal is actively involved in the acute and long term management of patients who have sustained traumatic dental injuries and is also the founder chairperson of Dental Trauma UK – a new

charity set up to raise public and professional awareness in the prevention and management of traumatic dental injuries. Serpil will present 'Crash bang wallop – modern management of dental trauma' – giving ALL members of the dental team a better understanding of the presentation and management of traumatic dental injuries with a focus on the management of dental fractures and the management of luxation injuries.

Delegates will, as usual, be joined by a large number of exhibitors and sponsors – providing the opportunity to meet suppliers and find out about the latest innovations, plus, there will be a networking event after the main scientific programme.

Join the Faculty for six hours of verifiable CPD, world class speakers, and great networking opportunities. To book places for you and your team go to <https://www.fgdp-nw.com/book-manchester-study-day/>.