Dental Council appears to view us with a very different lens, but it should reflect on that confirmed level of public trust in fulfilling and sticking to its core remit. The profession has lost faith in the GDC, the regulator that we fund. I sincerely believe it cannot function adequately or optimally in such a state. It has made steps in the right direction but needs to understand us and work with us to regain our trust too. Perhaps, if it was led by a fellow dentist, it may be better able to fulfil its remit in the long term.

Meanwhile, as we live through such unparalleled events, we as a profession also need to reaffirm our values and put our pride and passion back into our professionalism. It remains a scandal, in this day and age and in an advanced country such as ours, that thousands of school children are having general anaesthetics to have extractions. Yes, all eyes are on one public health challenge, but we will continue to lead on oral health.

We must be open to work with all parties no matter what our differences, and I aim to put my post to good use to help build bridges with the Chief Dental Officers, the dental faculties of the Royal Colleges and whoever else necessary.

I am a GDP who has had some amazing opportunities during the course of my career, and the privilege to have been involved with several august bodies and institutions. However, my last seven years as a member of the BDA's

Board have been thoroughly illuminating and a great education about a multiplicity of complex professional issues. I can safely say, without any fear or favour, that I observed at close quarters some of the best brains in dentistry at work. Each unique and individual in their own right and, as one combined unit, even greater than the sum of its parts.

The same applies to the balanced and tempered leadership exhibited by Mick Armstrong when dealing with some of the trickiest issues facing the Association, in all that the BDA does unselfishly for the benefit of the whole of the dental profession. Similarly, I would also like to commend those unsung heroes: all the staff of the BDA led by Martin Woodrow who became CEO at such a critical time but has already made a mark. I have never seen such a strong and dedicated team elsewhere. I would like to congratulate and thank them for all they do for us.

Yes, COVID has changed the game.

Many colleagues now face an uncertain future. Oral health inequalities we've struggled with for so long look set to widen. Prevention looks less attainable than ever.

But a pandemic isn't the time to step away from these challenges. It's the moment to confront them head on.

The World Health Organisation recommends we must 'think globally but

act locally.' However, to lead, co-ordinate and consolidate that process, for it to have maximum success, we need a strong national voice.

Already this crisis is showing what a strong association can do. It is plain to see for our friends and colleagues who are not members, what strength in numbers can achieve.

I am saddened that my own parents who instilled in me the thirst for knowledge and the drive to be something or do something positive, did not live to see this day, nor did my older brother Jay who always inspired me. However, I am proud to have the loyal support of my lovely wife Taru and our two daughters.

So, let me thank this country for giving me a home, this profession for providing me such a satisfying career, the BDA for granting me its highest honour and you all, for your support and good wishes.

I pledge to be a listening President for all our members, regardless of their background, specialty, or discipline. In these trying times we are stronger together.

But I truly believe it is the sheer diversity of this profession which makes us a force to be reckoned with that will enable us to get through this crisis.

Thank you! ■

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Valedictory address

Roz McMullan
BDA President 2019/20

As I write this address, our profession, country and the world are facing one of the biggest peacetime medical challenges since the influenza pandemic in 1918. Only history and robust public health research will tell us which of the policies have had an impact on our ability to manage the rapid transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. My thoughts and prayers are with all of you who have suffered COVID-19 or lost loved ones to this awful disease.

Never has it been more important to be part of the British Dental Association (BDA) family, knowing it is dentists working for dentists and stepping up to speak out on our behalf. Over the last

months I have seen BDA staff, directors, representatives and our academic colleagues working long hours to give consistent evidence-based advice to all our

'The great profession of dentistry will undoubtedly be changed, but it will survive.'

UK members at a time of uncertainty, so we can protect our patients, staff, families and ourselves. On behalf of the whole

profession, I want to take this opportunity to say thank you.

Individually we take responsibility for our professional decisions and making

those decisions can be frightening and stressful. There can be a lot at stake. The BDA aims to help you make the right

decision for you and support you through turbulent times.

We will defeat this new threat to our society. The great profession of dentistry will undoubtedly be changed, but it will survive. By the time you read this address, I hope you are well in body, mind and spirit. We are stronger together.

It was a great honour when the Northern Ireland (NI) Branch put my name forward for the role of National President of the BDA. I learnt the nomination was successful while I was entertaining Australian friends on a rather wet day with a trip round Bushmills Distillery, and I have the bottle of 10-year-old malt with a presentation label to prove it! I will be able to dine out on that tale for many years to come.

I went quite numb after I was told; then gradually the enormity of the task dawned. Preparation is key for the whirlwind of what it means to be President. During the year, I have had involvement in all three main aspects of the BDA: running the business and governance with PEC, representation of our members with the Country Councils and Craft Committees and the very important shopfront and service to our members through the Branches and Sections. One of the many highlights was the BDA Community Dental Conference in York; a great example of learning, networking, support and play. I have been afforded wonderful hospitality with lots of dinners and receptions, meeting the hard-working BDA volunteers around the United Kingdom who provide valuable expertise to our trade union role, as well as running the CPD and social

events, but unfortunately it is also 'a stone and a half job'.

There have been many visits to dental schools, talking to students about life as a dentist and explaining what the BDA can do for them. I can reassure you; our profession is safe in their hands. I have also had the opportunity to travel abroad to the FDI World Dental Congress and Council of European Dentists General Meeting, as well as invites to the New Zealand, Norwegian, French and Pacific Dental Conferences. The voice of the BDA is well-respected amongst the National Dental Associations; that does not come without a lot of hard work by the BDA representatives and staff.

The last year has been a momentous one for the BDA as we used the feedback from our members to ensure it provides a valued product. One of the visible outcomes has been the successful launch of BDA Indemnity, which is developed and delivered by highly respected and knowledgeable dentists and is proving to be a significant addition to the marketplace.

While the role of National President is largely ambassadorial, you do have some influence. When I began my year, I said I would take as my theme mental health well-being in dentistry. Who knew back then that this theme would be so important for our members and their teams delivering healthcare during this pandemic?

I was pleased to discover that the BDA were already considering this issue and our marvellous team were all too ready and willing to embrace my enthusiasm. I have been able to advance that work on a

national stage with the BDA facilitating a Mental Health Well-being day in February 2020, which included all the major stakeholders in dentistry. On a personal note, I have also been afforded the opportunity to talk with small and large groups of dentists on this important subject, sharing evidence-based prevention and treatment strategies.

I was proud that the BDA launched the Heath-Assured helpline during my presidency; providing a safe and confidential space for members, including students, who are feeling overwhelmed. It is proving to be a valuable resource and it is encouraging to see BDA members accessing this service.

I have had invaluable support from the wonderful staff and facilities at BDA HQ. When government restrictions are lifted, I urge you to call into Wimpole Street the next time you are in London, help yourself to a free coffee in the foyer and when you are finished, inspect the exhibition which is always meticulously put together by the museum and library staff, and look around the fabulous museum.

I must thank my support network of family and friends, who have held everything together in London and NI to allow me to fulfil my role. Then there is Alison Magee, who as PA to the senior management team has expertly arranged trains, planes and hotels, ensuring my life ran smoothly.

I know that my successor, Russ Ladwa, has been preparing for his presidential year. He will bring great knowledge and skills to the role and I wish him well. ■

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