of cross-infection control, limited patient capacity, patient flow within the practice and the need for enhanced cleaning of surgeries after each patient, including the now revised fallow time after aerosol generating procedures

- Any increase in throughput will, in the opinion of the profession and the BDA, increase the risk to health and safety procedures to dentists, staff, and above all, to the welfare of patients as dentists attempt to cut corners to increase throughput.

In the 1970s, around 95% of all dental treatment in the UK was done under the NHS. By June 2018, this had fallen to around

50%.¹ If the Department continues with its current policy, there is a real danger that more dentists will leave the NHS, or at least reduce their commitment to NHS dentistry even further, and the NHS dental services, once the envy of the developed world, will wither on the vine.

Finally, it has not escaped the profession's eye that clawback will further hazard the financial stability of practices, already reeling from the hit of vastly reduced throughput (affecting both the NHS and private sectors) and exorbitant PPE costs. There is a real risk that practices in socially deprived areas where the only option is to work within the NHS may find themselves financially unviable.

The profession urges the Department to rescind the 1 January orders with immediate effect and enter into real and meaningful negotiations, not diktat, with the profession's representatives, the GDPC, without delay. Otherwise, patients' safety will be put at risk and the NHS primary dental services will continue to wither on the vine. This government will go down in history as the one that finally destroyed it.

R. Grant, Cramlington, UK

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Emergency dentistry

It could be mumps

Sir, I wish to gently remind colleagues about the need to be aware of seasonal infections which can mimic those of dental origin.

A patient recently attended A&E with a left-sided firm facial swelling over the mandible, and mild trismus. The A&E staff made a provisional diagnosis of a dental abscess and requested a maxillofacial opinion. On examination, the patient had a significant unilateral tender swelling, moderate trismus and a slightly elevated temperature. Clinical examination showed a sound dentition with no intraoral evidence of dental caries, swellings or draining sinuses. A panoramic radiograph showed no evident pathology. Having excluded a dental cause, further investigations confirmed that the patient was suffering from mumps.

Mumps is a notifiable infectious disease, and clinicians are obligated by the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984 and the Health Protection (Notification) Regulations 2010 to notify the local health protection team of any suspected cases.¹ Patients typically present with parotitis, which can be unilateral or bilateral. Orchitis (inflammation of the testes) is one of the most common mumps complications in post-pubertal males. Other non-specific symptoms include headache, pyrexia and myalgia. Symptoms typically resolve after ten days.² It is usually managed conservatively, with symptomatic relief, and patients require isolation for several days. In rare cases, there can be

serious complications including meningitis, encephalitis and pancreatitis.²

Mumps is now rare in the UK, due to the MMR vaccine. However, in 2020, cases in England reached their highest in over ten years.³ The peak incidence of mumps is in the late winter and spring.² It is important that clinicians have awareness of this disease and keep it in mind as a differential diagnosis, particularly at this time of the year.

S. Acharya, Liverpool, UK

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BDJ covers

Covered in congratulations

Sir, congratulations on the very interesting front covers for volume 229 of the *BDJ* by dental student Rachel Jackson. Your readers may like to know of the Medical Art Society which is for doctors, dentists and vets, whether working, retired or students, who enjoy painting, drawing or sculpture when at leisure. The highlight of the year is the annual exhibition which has been held at the Royal Society of Medicine for several years.

We show a wide range of subjects and media, but clinical images and photographs are not accepted. The Society is now administered by Hampstead School of Art and has its own website. To join the Society, make contact by email: mas@hsoa.co.uk.

A. Bond, Stoke-on-Trent, UK

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-021-2621-z>

Oral health

Nicotine pouches

Sir, nicotine pouches, also referred to as non-medicinal nicotine pouches or tobacco-free snus, are small receptacles that contain white nicotine powder which a user places in the anterior maxillary vestibule.¹ They originated in Scandinavia and their distribution is rapidly widening to other countries, with five tobacco manufacturers currently selling their products in the UK.¹ Currently unregulated in the European Union, their packaging carries no health warnings and are widely advertised online, on billboards and buses as 'harmless tobacco-free alternatives'.²

The evidence behind the correlation of nicotine and cancer development is inconclusive, although several studies have illustrated that nicotine can facilitate a tumour-supporting environment and has proven genotoxic effects.³ Oral mucosal changes (for example, hyperkeratotic changes) behind habitual oral nicotine use have been documented.⁴

These nicotine pouches are being marketed as a vogue and safe way to get a 'nicotine hit' without the associated negative health