

Letters to the editor

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Climate change

Dental Extinction Rebellion

Sir, urgent action is needed to tackle the climate emergency, and I believe dentists need to be part of collective action to demand this.

Following leaving dentistry to complete a Global Public Health MSc, I have been part of the Extinction Rebellion (XR) movement, attending the rebellion in London this April. Disruption in the form of civil disobedience is necessary at a crucial point where leaders choose to ignore scientific facts and the people across the world who have knowledge and solutions. The Doctors for XR group were part of the action blocking Lambeth Bridge, during which six of them were arrested. They did this because the climate crisis is the biggest public health risk of the twenty-first century, which will lead, and has already led, to loss of lives and is threatening a liveable future for all. The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report states it is now or never for action to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees.¹

I read your joint editorial in the *BMJ* 'Call for emergency action to limit global temperature increases, restore biodiversity, and protect health' which discusses how health professionals must act to reduce harm from the environmental crisis, prevent further damage and hold global leaders to account.²

Politicians and corporations are not only being too slow to take action, but they are also actively blocking it and delaying solutions for the climate crisis. Many in the medical world have shown support for activists taking part in non-violent direct action, such as those in XR; however, the lack of dental professionals' presence and support has been obvious. A potential explanation is the GDC, who are known for their ability to instill fear within dentists regarding their registrations and future careers.

The Doctors for XR group have quoted GMC guidelines on their website: 'You must take prompt action if you think that patient safety, dignity or comfort may be compromised'.³ Dentists also have a duty of care and to put patients' interests first, stated by the GDC.⁴ As health workers, I feel dentists should be able to participate in this non-violent direct action without fear of their regulators and employers. In my experience, dentists distance themselves as far from politics as they can, able to pretend that it does not involve them. However, all health is political.

I feel dentists have an obligation to be joining the other doctors and healthcare workers to demand action is taken. Dental professionals are desperately needed in these movements and have a valuable role to play. There are many: Health for a Green New Deal, Extinction Rebellion, Stop Cambo to name a few. Please join us, this is our last chance.

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Oral health education

Metaverse and oral health promotion

Sir, health education is fundamental for oral disease prevention and oral health promotion. However, most individuals

and communities have been facing serious obstacles for accessing primary oral healthcare as well as oral health education around the world.

After experiencing different technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, artificial intelligence and 3D internet, we are hearing about Metaverse, which is an extension of the internet and allows interaction between users and their environment. Oral health education and conversations can be provided virtually to target groups and communities through Metaverse software by either public or private health sectors for public benefits.¹ There are no travel costs, no limit to the number of participants; and it can educate different target groups, delivering different sessions from anywhere in the world. All these can provide the highest accessibility for oral health education for schoolchildren, teachers and caregivers.^{2,3}

Nonetheless, we are aware that digital advertising is a major global business, promoting unhealthy habits and products. Therefore, governments and policymakers are urged to enact restrictive policies for unhealthy foods and habits, especially alcoholic beverages and tobacco product advertisements, on the Metaverse platform. These are all serious risk factors for non-communicable diseases. The Metaverse platform is expected to promote oral health, healthy lifestyle and wellbeing as well as preserving health equity as core values.³

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