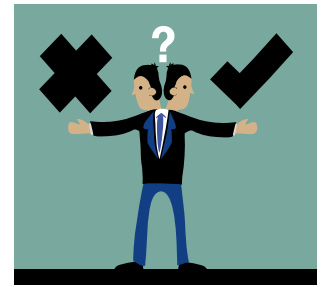


A curate's egg

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



So here we are. The first significant changes to the 2006 NHS dental contract for England are on their way, and they are marginal at best. Five UDAs for more extensive Band 2 treatment and seven UDAs for molar RCT are the headline-grabbing features. Increased use of therapists for restorative treatment and a subtle reminder that NICE guidelines for recalls should be followed are some of the suggestions that are apparently aimed at increasing access.

Depending on who you listen to, the contract updates are either courageous steps in the right direction for dental reform or a slap in the face for hard-working dentists, and the NHS should be ashamed for even tabling them. Of course, as is often the case, the truth lands somewhere in the middle.

The intentions behind the contract changes are sound. Increased access to care, focus on prevention etc, but these aren't new aims, and it's not immediately apparent how any of this will come about.

In the short term, there's a real risk that these changes will reduce access. How? Well, even if we all suddenly follow NICE recall guidelines rigidly, it will take six months to a year for this to filter through to a meaningful increase in patient throughput. In the meantime, we're picking up an increased number of UDAs for routine treatment and hitting our targets earlier or while seeing fewer patients. Similarly, there is no indication of how dentists should attract the limited number of therapists to carry out restorative treatment when many are already happily employed to provide hygiene care, often in private practice. It does, however, show understanding that, as a profession, we should recognise and support other team members' enhanced roles in delivering care to patients.

We were advised some time ago that these initial changes would be small and for an interim period while a larger revamp of NHS dentistry was carried out. This sticking plaster and bandage contract reform is hoped to keep dentists working away until a new dawn of dentistry is realised. While the reforms are

somewhat of a curate's egg, reading between the lines, they are designed to show that, as a profession, we can utilise our existing budget efficiently and to its fullest extent before we're allowed any more money from the Treasury. Of course, the Exchequer is coming under increasing pressure from all sides, but conventional wisdom would state that the longer dentists are kept waiting for more significant reforms, the more likely it is that they will jump ship.

But is the cost-of-living crisis and forecast imminent recession an unlikely saviour of NHS dentistry? Could it be that dentists will be relying on an NHS contract's more or less guaranteed income over the more uncertain, if more lucrative, promise of dentistry away from the NHS? This may be the case, but unless real reform is planned for and enacted, the private conversion rates will skyrocket as soon as the economy picks up.

The *BDJ*'s Impact Factor soars

The *British Dental Journal*'s Journal Impact Factor (JIF) has this year increased from 1.626 to 2.727, meaning that the *BDJ* now ranks 48/92 in the *Dentistry, Oral Surgery and Medicine* category. This increase has moved the *BDJ* up to the next ranking quartile, into Q3.

The annual JIF is a ratio between citations and recent citable items published. The 2021 JIFs were therefore calculated by dividing the number of citations each journal received in 2021 to the source items published in that journal during 2019 and 2020. The annual JIF is released in summer each year.

Journal performance is measured in several ways, including numbers of citations and downloads. Clarivate's Journal Citation Reports generates the JIF

report and other citation data for more than 12,000 journals and conference proceedings in the sciences and social sciences indexed in Web of Science. Alongside an increase in the JIF, the *BDJ* also saw increases in other citation metrics, including the Journal Citation Indicator, which is a measure of citation performance that is normalised to the category the journal is indexed within, therefore allowing journals to be more easily compared between categories.

Commenting on the announcement of the *BDJ*'s latest Impact Factor, Rebecca Shreeve, Executive Publisher, Medicine and Life Sciences at Springer Nature, said: "This is a fantastic achievement, only made possible by all the hard work that has gone into this journal, so huge congratulations to everyone involved!"

Table 1 shows 2021 citation metrics for the *BDJ*. For more information visit <https://www.nature.com/bdj/journal-information>.

Table 1 2021 citation metrics for the *British Dental Journal*

2021 citation metrics	2021
Two-year Impact Factor	2.727
Five-year Impact Factor	2.529
Immediacy Index	0.730
Journal Citation Indicator	0.94
Article Influence Score	0.479
Normalised Eigenfactor	1.00507
Rank	48/92
Downloads	5,435,751