

Cardiff women: an inspiration to us all

Robert McAndrew¹

Key points

This paper recognises the welcome transition from a male-dominated profession.

Notes the achievements of some notable female academics in Cardiff.

Informs of the School's continuing mission to an inclusive culture.

Abstract

Cardiff University School of Dentistry opened in 1966 and remains on its original site which it shares with the University Hospital of Wales. It currently admits around 100 undergraduate students per year: 74 Bachelor of Dental Surgery students, 26 dental care professionals and 40 postgraduate students. Whilst the School's overall vision is for 'excellent, equitable dental and oral health through education and research', one of the key aims to reach this is an inclusive and welcoming culture which ensures equal opportunities for staff and students of all ages, ethnicities, disabilities, family structures, genders, nationalities, sexual orientations, races, religions or other beliefs and socio-economic backgrounds. This has developed from deeply embedded and ingrained beliefs common to the School that cultivating a diverse staff and student body enriches the student experience and encourages innovation in teaching and research through outward-looking staff.

Introduction

Arriving in Cardiff in 1993, I have been privileged to witness the growth and development of the Dental School, seen many a refurbishment of infrastructure and witnessed the comings and goings of personnel as the School drives forwards to remain a recognised centre of academic and clinical excellence. It prides itself in growing the service it provides to the Principality and the UK as its graduates continue to serve the NHS in each of the home nations. I have been fortunate to experience and indeed humbled to observe and be involved in some of the many notable events over the years, including the School being recognised through the Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2009, getting ranked first amongst UK Dental Schools in

2016 by both *The Guardian* and *The Times'* Good University Guides, the many Research Excellence Frameworks up to and including the most recent recognising the valuable impact and the value the School has to Cardiff University as an institution and beyond.

It is known that over 55% of UK dentists are and that over 90% of dental hygienists, therapists and dental nurses are registered as women. The British Dental Association website shows us that in 2017–2018, almost 50% of practising dentists were women compared to 39% in 2007.¹ The opportunity afforded by the 150th anniversary of the *British Dental Journal* to highlight some of the School's history, share in its developments, or indeed promote the school, has proved both opportunistic and insightful, for it is only through writing this personal view that I am able to highlight what has been an integral and longstanding core value of Cardiff in maintaining and promoting inclusion and diversity within its four walls. It is both an honour and privilege to have witnessed first-hand the School's determination to be gender inclusive and unconsciously unbiased in its approach to ensure the School is served

by the best possible people. I am sure Cardiff is not alone in its journey of over 55 years and many other dental schools could share similar experiences.

As that young lecturer in periodontology arriving from Dundee in 1993, there certainly was a feeling of male predominance amongst the senior staff but the seeds of change were already being sown and observable amongst the younger, less senior staff. While my reflection will serve to highlight some of the more notable achievements by a small number of women who have paved the way to break through any glass ceilings and inspire further generations, this should not deflect from the countless others who have graced the School's four walls. They have undoubtedly made their own mark and provided invaluable, insightful and significant contributions to the Dental School (the School of Hygiene and Therapy) to ensure our graduates were suitable for the workforce and our programmes remained fit for purpose both internally and externally. While I do not wish to embarrass anyone, it would be remiss of me not to mention

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those who do not have their own personal achievements highlighted. I have my own memories and recollections of each one's contributions and influences, as I am sure many will as they read through the following list: Carolann Beck, Claudia Blakytyn, Margaret Hunter, Ilona Johnson, Gill Jones, Bindhu Koshy, Maria Morgan, Gaynor Osborne, Josie Prior, Morgana Vianna and Shelagh Thompson.

Highlighted biographies

Professor Elizabeth Treasure (BDS, PhD, FRACDS, FDSRCS, FFPH)



Fig. 1 Professor Elizabeth Treasure

Professor Treasure (Fig. 1) studied dentistry at the University of Birmingham where she gained both her Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) and subsequent PhD. After ten years working for the NHS, she moved to New Zealand to work as a public health dentist and as a lecturer and senior lecturer at the University of Otago. In 1995, she returned to the UK as a senior lecturer and consultant in dental public health at the University of Wales College of Medicine where, in 2000, she was appointed to a Chair. Professor Treasure's research interests include clinical effectiveness, epidemiology and clinical trials. She chaired a review of the dental workforce in Wales and has been scientific adviser to the Department of Health's dental division.

In 2006, she was appointed Dean of the Dental School and general manager of the Cardiff University Dental Services Group.

In 2010, she was appointed the first ever female Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Cardiff University.

In December 2016, she was appointed Vice Chancellor of Aberystwyth University and currently still holds that office. We understand that while Professor Ted Marsland held the position of acting Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor at Birmingham, Elizabeth is the first dentist to be appointed a substantive Vice-Chancellor in the UK.

Professor Barbara Chadwick (MBE, BDS, MScD, PhD, FDSRCS)



Fig. 2 Professor Barbara Chadwick

Professor Chadwick (Fig. 2) completed her undergraduate dental studies with honours at the London Hospital Medical College before moving to Cardiff, where she successfully defended her Master of Science in Dentistry (MScD) in 1990 and PhD in 1997, both being conferred by the University of Wales. In all, Professor Chadwick dedicated 35 years of service to Cardiff Dental School. As a specialist in paediatric dentistry, Professor Chadwick sat on the Specialist Advisory Committee in Orthodontics and Paediatric Dentistry at the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh.

She has played a pivotal part in research and while responsible for dental health surveys and significant National Institute for Health and Care Research-funded clinical trials, she has been instrumental in leading change in the field of paediatric dentistry across the UK by implementing research into patient care through her student teaching and the development of national guidelines.

Professor Barbara Chadwick acted as Director of Education and Students and was acting co-Head of School prior to the appointment of the School's current Head.

After retirement in 2020, she received a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to paediatric dental health in 2021.

Professor Rachel O'Brien-Waddington (MSc, PhD)



Fig. 3 Professor Rachel O'Brien-Waddington

Professor Waddington (Fig. 3) is the current President of the British Society for Oral and Dental Research (BSODR). As a non-clinical professor in oral biochemistry, she has worked in academia since her appointment as lecturer in the School of Dentistry in 1989 and was appointed as professor in 2011. Her research interests centre on the cell and matrix biology of bone and dentine repair and applying this research to improve diagnosis, management and treatment in clinical dentistry and orthopaedic medicine. During her research career, she has been awarded the BSODR's Senior Colgate Prize, the Mineralised Tissue Research Group Mineralised Tissue Research travel prize and the Royal Society Overseas Study award. She has supervised more than 25 PhD students, a large proportion of who have themselves entered an academic career in the dental field in the UK, Sweden, USA, Iraq and Malaysia. Over the past ten years, Professor Waddington has been involved in driving the School's Athena SWAN action plan to support women to not only achieve but

thrive in a competitive academic environment and in 2020 she led the School's submission to a successful Silver Award.

Professor Sheila Oliver (BDS, MSc)



Fig. 4 Professor Sheila Oliver

As a Cardiff graduate, Professor Oliver (Fig. 4) worked for 42 years within the Dental School and associated University and health boards contributing to education and dental services in the areas of oral surgery and special care dentistry. Her interest in dental education fuelled a Master of Science in Medical Education and the award of Fellowship of the Higher Education

Academy. Professor Oliver was the first female academic at the Dental School to receive a Chair for Dental Education. She served for many years as the Director of Assessment, having been appointed as a professor/honourary consultant in conscious sedation and special care dentistry in 2015 and previously employed in several NHS clinical positions at the University College of Wales and subsequently, Cardiff Dental School. Professor Oliver's achievements in education have been recognised nationally and internationally through the Mature Educators Excellence Award conferred by the Association for Dental Education in Europe.

Conclusion

The School continues to promote, encourage and develop opportunities for all staff. It celebrates excellence, encourages academic promotion and advances gender parity in career development. It believes deeply in promoting a culture of dignity, courtesy and respect and strives for a sustainable work-life balance whilst supporting and promoting equality, diversity and inclusivity to facilitate the elimination of all forms of discrimination.

Staff throughout the School are active members of external decision-making committees, society management committees and editorial boards and are proactive for providing grant reviews, as well as sitting on grant decision-making award panels. It is safe to say that all our senior academics, but perhaps and especially the women listed, have helped inspire and opened

opportunities for junior staff to find a suitable role with the family that is dentistry.

While I can only reiterate that the views in this short opinion piece are my own, it really is an honour to highlight the foresight and forward thinking of the School and the legacy left by so many influential women. I am also certain that the incumbent female academic and clinical academic staff will also leave, at the right time, their respective legacies: Waraf Al-Yaseen, Emily Banks, Shannu Bhatia, Jane Davies, Sharon Dewitt, Charlotte Emanuel, Elaine Ferguson, Jennifer Galloway, Grace Kelly, Nicola Innes, Rhiannon Jones, Ruby Long, Heather Lundbeck, Paola Marino, Caryl Wilson-Nagrani, Charlotte Richards, Kathryn Rowles, Leili Sadaghiani and Melanie Wilson.

Ethics declaration

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

All participants have given their written consent to have their pictures published.

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