

## Mental health and wellbeing

### Eco anxiety

Sir, I write regarding the recent Eco Focus Issue published in the *BDJ*.<sup>1</sup> With the increasing emphasis on eco-friendly dental services, the overall impact of dentistry on the environment can be considered a matter of concern at a psychological level as well. Literature has described worry and fear regarding the climate crisis as 'climate anxiety'. Evidence has shown that anxiety associated with climate change is a growing mental health concern that influences the quality of life in children and young people globally.<sup>2</sup> Do dental professionals experience similar anxiety related to climate change as a result of the negative environmental effects of dental practice? What implications might there be on the future dental workforce's mental health in the short and long term?

As the framework for climate anxiety and mental health is still being strengthened, it has been suggested that effective policy-making practices by governments can support the choices of an individual that are guided by concern for sustainability and planetary health.<sup>2,3</sup> Recognising anxiety related to climate change can be considered as an opportunity to educate the young and direct additional efforts into the promotion of sustainability.<sup>2</sup>

A. Kaushik, Chandigarh, India

### References

1. Duane B. Sustainability in dentistry gathers momentum. *Br Dent J* 2022; **233**: 241.
2. Sampaio F, Sequeira C. Climate anxiety: trigger or threat for mental disorders? *Lancet Planet Health* 2022; doi: 10.1016/S2542-5196(22)00008-0.
3. Tso K. What is 'sustainability'? Is it the same thing as taking action on climate change? 2021. Available at: <https://climate.mit.edu/ask-mit/what-sustainability-it-same-thing-taking-action-climate-change> (accessed September 2022).  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-022-5164-z>

## Publishing and research

### Is it that difficult?

Sir, I write in response to a recent Letter to the Editor<sup>1</sup> emphasising the need for guidance and teaching for young dentists in building their academic portfolio.

Being a foundation dentist myself, I welcome the comments made stressing the importance of building a well-rounded portfolio, yet there are some remarks I wish to contest. The author expressed concern regarding the lack of ability young dentists have in conducting research, stating: 'they [young dentists] are never taught to collect data for an audit, or how to carry out a research project'. Having completed a biomedical degree before dentistry, I appreciate the differences between graduates and undergraduate students in their ability to apply scientific methods and approaches to medical research. Early exposure to research through a previous degree allows an individual to enhance their skills in critically analysing data, formulating research questions, applying findings from literature, and understanding ethical and governance issues in research. Some UK undergraduate dental degrees incorporate a student-selected component (SSC) into their dental curriculum.

The General Medical Council ensures all UK medical degrees include an SSC to the course, allowing students to study beyond the scope of the core curriculum, providing an opportunity to pursue academia/personal and vocational interests, and apply and develop skills in research.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, the Standards for Education document produced by the General Dental Council does not emphasise SSC.<sup>3</sup> Although most undergraduate dental courses in the UK offer an intercalated BSc/MSc to enhance research skills, I feel the responsibility lies with the GDC which should revise their standards for

dental education by incorporating an SSC into the dental curriculum.

The letter also expressed concerns regarding young dentists not 'knowing how to get published'. My first introduction to publishing was an evening lecture where the *BDJ* Editor-in-Chief gave a lecture titled: 'Getting published in the *BDJ* and elsewhere'. This provided a great level of motivation and guidance on publishing. I am sure many universities would benefit from such a lecture, and an email inviting the *BDJ* to give an in-person lecture or webinar would provide a great level of guidance and opportunities to others.

Lastly, the author mentioned the elements that make up a 'good' portfolio including academic achievements, but stated 'young dentists will inevitably miss out on opportunities as a result of not knowing where to look for them'. Having recently taken part in the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry Rising Star Scholarship, it was disappointing to find only 11 out of the thousands of applicable dental students across the UK submitted an entry for the competition. There are many extra-curricular opportunities available to dental students/new graduates, all of which are well communicated through various channels. Perhaps young dentists lack the initiative to take on these opportunities, rather than 'not knowing where to look for them'?

R. Lee, London, UK

### References

1. Barrow R. Portfolios and careers. *Br Dent J* 2022; **233**: 245–246.
2. General Medical Council. Tomorrow's doctors. 1st ed. 2003. Available at: <https://www.educacionmedica.net/pdf/documentos/modelos/tomorrowdoc.pdf> (accessed October 2022).
3. General Dental Council. Standards for Education: Standards and requirements for providers. 2nd ed. 2015. Available at: [www.gdc-uk.org/docs/default-source/quality-assurance/standards-for-education-%28revised-2015%29.pdf](http://www.gdc-uk.org/docs/default-source/quality-assurance/standards-for-education-%28revised-2015%29.pdf) (accessed October 2022).  
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41415-022-5165-y>