

## A dentist's diary: January

By Sarveen Mann, Principal at The Fulham Dentist



2022 – the year when dental practices stopped obsessing over COVID regulations and restrictions and put their common sense to good use instead.

Every year I look back at the events of the previous year, pop open a bottle of bubbles and give myself a pat on the back. I made it through!

And my family let out a collective sigh of relief. Because apparently, I can get a tad stressed running a dental practice. Who'd have thought eh?

Truth be told I don't know how I got the practice, my patients and my staff through the last three years. And it all seems rather surreal now. Telephone triaging, the furlough scheme, the fallow times, standard operative procedures, the confusion, the lack of clarity from the dental powers that be...

We continue to face COVID consequences – the survival of NHS dentistry being a major one. Admittedly it's been an ongoing issue for many years, starting with the 2006 contract and exacerbated to a point where patients are now struggling to get an NHS dentist.

I recently gave up our small NHS contract. As a practice owner I had to do the figures and it was obvious that it didn't make good business sense to keep it. Every practice owner has to make difficult decisions and there is no wrong or right – just what is right for you. But whether one stayed in the NHS or left or sat on the fence, the media went to town on reporting the lack of access to NHS dentistry.

Anger from the public was aimed at dentists and dentists in turn blamed the government. But the saddest thing to see was

the internal fighting, private dentistry being pitted against NHS dentistry.

I want to remind those who think private and NHS dentists are different breeds that we all started out the same – humble dental students learning about the oral cavity and how and when to wield a drill.

And then we graduated.

And then came the pure panic when faced with a difficult situation and no demonstrator to turn to. The simple extraction that turned into a surgical nightmare, the perforated root treatment, the filling that fell out the day after – no – an hour after you had placed it.

We have all been there regardless of whether you ultimately ended up in private dentistry, working in the NHS or both.

General dentistry is a business so it's a given we need to be financially viable and as dental professionals our priority is educating the public on good oral health and treating dental disease.

Money and healthcare do not sit comfortably together. But we need to make the public understand that we are doing our best, under tough circumstances, to provide an excellent dental service. That this service costs money, whether privately or whether subsidised on the NHS.

The profession needs to stand united in delivering this message.


Please forgive me my mini rant as I sign off. Mouths to save and mouths to feed – the life of a principal dentist.


Until next time, keep smiling!


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## BDA AGMs

The BDA West of Scotland Branch AGM will be held on Wednesday 15 March 2023 from 18:15–21:00 at the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, 232–242 St Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5RJ.

All BDA members welcome. For further information and to book please visit: <https://www.bda.org/events/branches-sections/west-of-scotland-branch-wednesday-15-march-2023>.

The AGM will take place from 18:15–18:50; this will be followed by refreshments, and the Presidential lecture by Peter Ommer from 19:00 to 20:30. The event will close at 21:00.

