

A new morning

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



Here we are at the twilight of 2023, with the dawn of a new year peeking over the horizon and our attention turning to the year ahead. We'll start the new year with the prospects of two major shake-ups of the dental landscape incoming, namely the likelihood of a General Election and a new registrar and chief executive for the GDC, both of which bring a degree of uncertainty.

Although the political environment is a little more stable than last year's, the government is firmly entering election mode, and we find ourselves with yet another new Health Secretary and Minister responsible for dentistry. One would assume that their focus would not be on reforming the current NHS contract before an election but on what promises they can make to ensure they stay in power. There's also little coming from the opposition parties as to their plans for the future of dentistry – no doubt they want to keep their powder dry for fear of anyone else stealing their ideas.

In addition, the recent Health and Social Care Committee report on dentistry is in limbo. Its findings confirmed what dentists have been saying for years, with an NHS service in crisis and many unable to access any form of dentistry. But with little time to bring forward any proposal for change in this session of Parliament and a government facing a seemingly monumental struggle to keep its position in charge, the report risks being buried, and its recommendations are unlikely to be acted upon. No matter the election result, any new government will take time to get up to speed with new faces in ministerial positions and new ideas to bring to the profession. Under the NHS, dentistry is in a holding pattern for the foreseeable future.

However, what is guaranteed to change is how the GDC is overseen. The chief executive manages the day-to-day running of the Council, and Ian Brack moving on should see a line drawn under the time where we were encouraged to see patients not as people in search of oral healthcare but as customers purchasing a product. At

the time of writing, there has been no mention of a replacement for Mr Brack, but whoever is chosen to fill the position requires an intrinsic understanding of everyday life as a healthcare professional. While the Professional Standards Agency, the regulators' regulator, has reported improvements in the operation of the GDC, there are still issues to be solved, including the process of the ORE exams and ongoing problems with Fitness to Practise procedures. The new chief executive needs to prioritise these areas, but also has the power to make dentistry a more welcoming profession for those wishing to enter. The government is putting people off wanting to work in the NHS, and the GDC makes many wonder if the job is worthwhile at all. The following year could be pivotal for the future of dentistry. Let's hope whoever ends up running the show knows what they're doing.

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Outstanding recognition for green accreditation programme at FDI World Dental Congress



Greener Dentistry, the international accreditation programme for dental practices wanting to reduce their environmental impact, was highlighted in a talk on sustainability

at the FDI World Congress in Sydney in September. The package of resources that members of Greener Dentistry can access was referenced in a presentation by Michael Fahey, Henry Schein's Commercial Director.

Michael was demonstrating the measures that the dental profession and industry can

implement to enhance their environmental sustainability. He highlighted the Greener Dentistry toolbox – the web-based package of measures which practices can implement – and its certification scheme, which enables dental practices to raise awareness of their commitment to being socially and environmentally responsible.

Davinder Raju, the founder of Greener Dentistry, was among a group of pro-environmental individuals interviewed by Michael ahead of the Congress. The title of Michael's talk was 'Partnering with Industry to Support Sustainable Dentistry'.

The intention of his presentation, Michael said afterwards, was to provide very practical

ways that dental practices can reduce their impact and environmental footprint.

Davinder said: 'It was a pleasure to discuss all things sustainable with Michael, and I am delighted that Greener Dentistry was namechecked at such a prestigious event at which more than 8,000 dental professionals from around the world were gathered – this is outstanding recognition. My aim is to make a difference, and the more people who join Greener Dentistry and start implementing our programme, the less environmental impact dentistry will have.'

For more information on Greener Dentistry visit <https://greenerdentistry.global>.