

## Prize-winning young dentists embrace ethical challenges at DLEF

For the second year running, the Dental Law and Ethics Forum (DLEF) hosted an evening at which promising young dentists addressed complex dento-legal issues.

Triman Ahluwalia, Laura Chimdi Ota and Reanna Craig all won first prize in one of the DLEF's three essay categories in 2023; they were each given £250 and an invitation to present to the DLEF meeting on 7 December.

The audience in the offices of Hempsons, the law firm specialising in medicine, dentistry and social care, were universally impressed by how thorough and thoughtful the prize-winners had been in writing their essays, as well as the high standard of presentation.

The winner in the undergraduate category for an essay on 'Is it possible to obtain consent from a patient who has dementia?' was Triman Ahluwalia. He highlighted that dementia presents a whole host of clinical, legal and ethical challenges for the dental team, being associated with poorer oral hygiene, limited access to care and difficulties in obtaining informed consent.

He said treating dementia patients in practice requires a nuanced, kind and patient-centred approach. Dementia patients should be involved in decision-making whether they had capacity or not. Dentists face challenges related to communication barriers, capacity to consent, behavioural issues and the involvement of caregivers and substitute decision-makers.



DLEF prizewinners Reanna Craig (left), Laura Chimdi Ota and Triman Ahluwalia with DLEF's Leo Briggs

In the first year category, for an essay entitled 'Is it ever ethical to do something that is illegal?' was Reanna Craig. She highlighted treatments that were widely believed to be therapeutic that were also illegal and brought attention to the ethical challenges dentists face within pressurised environments. She spoke about how ethics have evolved to become more patient-centred. Reanna discussed how the power dynamic favours the dentist, and this means the dentist must be an extremely good communicator in order to empower their patients.

In the 2-5 year registered category, for an essay on 'What are the dento-legal issues to consider if a 17-year-old patient wants limited treatment orthodontics followed by

composite bonding?' was Laura Chimdi Ota. She explored the inherent challenges posed by a compromised treatment, highlighting that a thorough assessment of the patient was key. She emphasised the importance of explaining the potential long-term implications of the proposed treatment to the patient so that valid consent was appropriately obtained, querying whether this could be done by a clinician with limited experience of orthodontics.

All three speakers provoked fascinating questions from the floor, showcasing the knowledge and experience of DLEF members. This was the second year of the DLEF essay competition, and it is hoped that like the Royal Institution Christmas Lecture, it becomes a tradition. ✦

## Introducing The BDJ Big Impact Collection

In December, The BDJ Big Impact Collection of articles was launched on the *BDJ* website. This collection brings together the very best of the *British Dental Journal* – the most cited, most accessed and most shared articles from the last 12 months (including press coverage, blogs, Twitter, Facebook and Weibo).

This content reveals the nature and quality of the *BDJ* – offering perspectives on clinical practice and



research which resonate far beyond the UK.

The Collection is separated into three sections: most cited, most accessed and most shared. The most downloaded and most shared article is 'Oral hygiene, mouthwash usage and cardiovascular mortality during 18.8 years of follow-up' (<https://www.nature.com/articles/s41415-023-5507-4>).

To view the Collection, use the QR code included with this story or visit <https://www.nature.com/collections/bdjbimpact>. ✦