

« The data show us that the academic workforce is ageing and as we look to future proof how we deliver dental care, now is the time to invest in clinical academia as part of the government's plans to recover and reform NHS dentistry. This includes providing adequate support and funding to early career clinical academics so that we have sufficient staff to replace the potential loss of expertise that may soon be retiring. Including clinical academics in discussions on contractual reform is also essential to ensuring academia is viewed as a valuable and rewarding career path.

'It is encouraging that there has been growth in general practice and some regional growth of clinical academics but a decline in other regions at a time when there are growing oral health inequalities is concerning. Gender disparities have improved greatly, but clearly more work is needed to support women to enter senior academic roles. There are also major ethnic disparities that need to be addressed, an issue not limited to clinical academia, but we need to better understand how to remove barriers that affect dental professionals from an ethnic minority background entering clinical academia.'

### References

1. NHS England. NHS Long Term Workforce Plan. 30 June 2023. Available at: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/nhs-long-term-workforce-plan/> (accessed April 2024).
2. Dental Schools Council. Clinical academic staff survey. Available at: <https://www.dentalschoolscouncil.ac.uk/clinical-academia/clinical-academic-staff-survey/> (accessed April 2024). ✦
3. CATCH. Available at: <https://www.catch.ac.uk/> (accessed April 2024).

## Notice of death

We regret to announce the death of Baroness Gardner of Parkes (17 July 1927–14 April 2024), an Australian-born British dentist and Conservative member of the House of Lords. Baroness Gardner of Parkes was the first and only dentist to become a life peer in the House of Lords. She was a long-time officer and active member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Dentistry and Oral Health into her mid-nineties. ✦

# Partnership will tackle stress and anxiety in dentistry



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The MPS Foundation has partnered with FDI World Dental Federation (FDI) on a project aimed to raise awareness of the importance of managing mental health and develop further resources for oral health professionals.

Dental Protection is a part of Medical Protection Society (MPS), which launched the MPS Foundation in 2022. It is a global not-for-profit research initiative that invests in research into patient safety and the wellbeing of healthcare professionals and teams. Now in its third year, it has already supported over 30 projects from across the world.

The FDI project – which is in its second phase – will run until December 2025. The project activities will revolve around the World Mental Health Day in October to raise awareness of and destigmatise mental health issues in dentistry. It will focus on dental professionals and students, promoting and extending the resources and tools created in the first phase of the project.

The successful first phase resulted in the production of an online mental health toolkit for dental professionals, dental practices and national dental associations, as well as resources like podcasts to address challenges faced by individuals and practices.

In the second phase, the project aims to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of addressing mental health issues and wellbeing for dental practitioners and

dental students, including the impact of patient dental phobia on practitioner mental health

- Challenge stigma by normalising the discussion of mental health issues around dentistry
- Develop resources and training materials for dental team members and dental students to address specific challenges
- Develop resources for patients, to prevent and manage dental anxiety and fear of visits to the dentist.

Dr Graham Stokes, dentist and MPS Foundation chair, said: 'We are pleased to partner with FDI on this important project to support dental professionals with mental wellbeing. The project sits well with the Foundation's and Dental Protection's objectives, and we look forward to seeing the insights that will arise from it.

'Our research has shown that increasingly more dental professionals deal with stress, worry and anxiety, which can result in serious mental health issues. These situations can also affect the quality of care provided and negatively impact on patients' wellbeing.

'All stakeholders in the dental profession have a responsibility to promote mental health and wellbeing for dental professionals and dental students who are exposed to high levels of stress and burnout.' ✦