Presidential address

Amarjit Gill

Send your comments to the Editor-in-Chief, British Dental Journal, 64 Wimpole Street, London W1G 8YS
Email bdj@bda.org

Amarjit Gill was installed as the new President of the British Dental Association at the 2010 British Dental Conference and Exhibition held in Liverpool on 20-22 May 2010. The following is his presidential address.

Fellow members of the British Dental Association, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to Liverpool and the 2010 British Dental Conference and Exhibition.

I am sure you will agree with me that that this will be a great event with inspiring speakers. Every day, these fantastic educational opportunities will culminate with the opportunity meet up with colleagues and have fun – and what a place Liverpool is to have fun.

First I want to pay tribute and thank our outgoing president, John Drummond and his wife Christine. I first worked with John on the Executive Board of the Association, when he chaired the Central Committee for Dental Academic Staff.

During his presidential year he has been first class in representing the BDA both overseas and in the UK, as well as visiting branches and sections across the country. On behalf of the Association, John, I want to congratulate and thank you for a successful year and wish you and your family well for the future.

The presidency is the highest honour the Association can bestow and I am honoured to have been chosen to take on this role. I want to thank the East Midlands Branch for nominating me and for the support I have had from colleagues in Nottinghamshire and across the profession. If I had to single out any one local colleague it would be Dr Ralph Davies. He pushed me into local BDA involvement and even collected me from home, to ensure my attendance. Today that seems a world away from this position of honour as BDA President. I would also like to give a special mention for the support of members of the Executive Board, Representative Body and BDA staff in Wimpole Street.

But I would like to reserve an extra special thanks to my colleagues at my practice and my family. There is no way that I could have worked for the Association nationally without the support and forbearance of Doctors Chris Gray, Simon and Anna Lawson together with the 11 practice staff who sustain us. They have had to ensure care for my patients during my absence from the practice, sometimes having to rearrange appointments at the last minute to accommodate urgent meetings.

I must also acknowledge the role of my wife Dawn and our children, Kieran and Yasmin, for the encouragement they have given to me. The BDA owes a great debt to those who we leave behind both in our practice and our homes when we are away on BDA business.

It was my interest in private dentistry that led me to join the BDA's Private Practice Committee. I have spent nine consecutive years on the Executive Board. This experience convinced me that the somewhat cosy world of dentistry and especially NHS dentistry was changing dramatically and motivated most of my political work. My initiation to a tumultuous political career was captured by Machiavelli when he stated 'There is nothing more difficult to take in hand, more perilous to conduct, or more uncertain in its success than to take the lead in the introduction of a new order to things.' Interesting times indeed!

This year, 2010, comes after a decade of turmoil – not only in the profession, but outside. NHS dentistry in England and Wales had a new contract introduced, which is by no means set in stone. The last decade witnessed momentous growth in private and cosmetic dentistry. The General Dental Council has been restructured and its remit extended to include dental care professionals. There were changes to governance and regulations.

Outside dentistry we have experienced the deepest, longest recession for over a hundred years, which has affected all countries of the world to a greater or lesser extent. We have had high Government spending, too high, many would say. We have entered a world of instant electronic communication and the World Wide Web. We have seen the effects of global warming, international terrorism and wars. The recent general election did not produce a definite winner. This means continuing uncertainty in the future.

I believe that change will be a constant during the next decade. Harold Wilson said, 'He who rejects change is the architect of decay. The only human institution which rejects progress is the cemetery.' The challenge for the Association and the profession for the next ten years is to respond effectively to these changes. The next ten years, however, offer a real opportunity to shape the delivery of dentistry in the UK if, and only if,

we positively embrace change and stop creating reasons why there is no need to do so. This was recognised over 40 years ago by Robert Kennedy who stated 'Progress is a nice word. But change is its motivator and change has its enemies.'

We know that 2010 is the start of another decade of change for us. The public finances are likely to remain dire. This will call into question the continuing funding for NHS dentistry and consequent priorities.

Three years ago the BDA launched a policy document *Dental futures – forward to twenty twenty*; that is in ten years time. The BDA sought to assess how current trends would develop and to identify the challenges which would face the profession and policy makers and funders. The report looked at trends in oral health and technology. It asked what the workforce would look like and how the money will be spent.

The profession will have to adapt to this change. The future of dentistry will be moving from the old surgical model of care to a more 'medical' approach, a well overdue and welcome advance.

The patient of the future will have different needs and different expectations. However, as Professor Steele reminded us last year, many of the 'heavy metal generation', with widespread amalgams and crowns, are still around and will require traditional dentistry.

We are training more dentists than ever before, but we will need to look at opportunities for career development and continuing professional development. Now that dental care professionals are registered, how do they fit into the delivery of

care by the whole dental team? Only recently a *BDJ* article found that patients attending a dental therapist had significantly higher levels of satisfaction compared with those who attended a dentist. The authors were from the Dental School in this very city. We in the UK have been the trailblazers of this change and where we have gone the rest of the world will surely follow.

We must all improve the care we deliver to patients through professional collaboration between the dentists, DCPs and, let us not forget, the dental industry. This collaboration is common in the rest of the real world but the latent synergy has not been fully realised.

NHS dentistry will be around in the future, but there will also be a growing private sector. The systems must learn to live with each other, just as they do in general practice.

Let me say that whilst we have a right to expect the BDA to help change things for the better for us, it does not absolve us of our responsibilities. The world famous Indian sage, Mahatma Gandhi, encapsulated this with 'Be the change you want to see in the world.'

I would like to close by saying thank you again to all those who have helped me along the way. In the coming year I am looking forward to meeting more of our members, visiting branches and sections, and representing the BDA here and overseas as well as developing links with all parts of the wider profession.

Thank you and enjoy the Conference.

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Valedictory address

John R. Drummond

John Drummond was installed as President of the British Dental Association at last year's 2009 British Dental Conference and Exhibition held in Glasgow. At this year's conference in Liverpool he gave the following valedictory address.

It is difficult to believe that a year has elapsed since I was installed as President of the British Dental Association. I was very honoured to be made your President and I have had a most wonderful year. The year has gone very quickly indeed and I have enjoyed meeting dentists and dental care professionals throughout the United Kingdom and abroad. Wherever Christine and I went we were made most welcome and this is testament to the friendliness of the profession.

I could not have carried out the duties of the post without the strong support of my Dean Professor Bill Saunders. I am also indebted to the clinical academic staff in Prosthetics who have shouldered an increased burden of duties when I have been away. Thank you Brendan Scott, Fiona Stewart, Romana Hunter and Shona Mason. The staff of the BDA have been tremendously helpful and I wish to single out Jonica Thomas, Alison Magee and Tonia Scholes who have organised my diary in