



# Valedictory address

Amarjit Gill

Amarjit Gill was installed as President of the British Dental Association at last year's 2010 British Dental Conference and Exhibition held in Liverpool. At this year's conference in Manchester he gave the following valedictory address.

In Liverpool, a year ago, I received the highest honour that the Association can bestow, when I became your President. It has been a very busy year with visits to our UK members. I am grateful for the warm welcome that I received from everyone.

There have been some overseas trips to Syria, Brazil, India, Ireland amongst others and I have also been invited to represent the Association at functions by other organisations. Everywhere I went I found that the Association was held in high esteem.

Last year I said that during the next decade change will be a constant. So the challenge for the profession and therefore the Association, over the next ten years, is to respond effectively to change. Indeed last year has been one of change and challenges, for us all.

We now have a new coalition government, the first for 70 years and a new minister, Secretary of State for Health, Rt Hon Andrew Lansley CBE, who will be speaking here later today. Aside from the coalition agreement which promised a new dental contract, we also learned that primary care trusts would be abolished and the new contract based on registration, capitation and quality would be piloted.

There will be no let-up in this process of change, next year or, as I forecast, at least until 2020. Two other major drivers for change, I believe, will be the expanding private sector and the increasing influence of corporate dentistry. Change will be a feature, not just in England, but in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Across the UK the Association will be needed, more than ever, to support its members through these challenging times.

We can expect to see the patients' expectations change too. In this internet age, who will choose to have disease dealt with by excision when prevention is so much more comfortable and cheaper in the long term? To see the future of dentistry move from the old 'surgical' model of care to a more 'medical' approach is a well overdue and welcome advance. This will remove the link of the invasive nature of dentistry from interfering with the true perception of our caring role in society.

Being the National President, whilst working as a clinician and pretending to be a father and husband has been a challenge in its own right. So, it's only natural to thank all of those

who have looked after me so well and made my year so enjoyable and memorable. I would like to thank the staff at the BDA who have supported me throughout the year and particularly Alison Magee, who made the year run smoothly by organising my programme so well. Thank you too, to my colleagues back at the practice for their forbearance and support. I now have many happy memories of a very special and unique year and I am grateful to you all.

Finally, my thanks go to the members of the BDA for giving me the honour of being President of this Association. I hope to continue my commitment to the BDA as I don't feel old enough to give it all up yet, however, I remain conscious that we should always open up the BDA for younger colleagues to come in and contribute too.

I am delighted to be handing the Presidency over to Janet Clarke. She and I worked together on the Executive Board of the Association and she always managed to say only what was needed to be heard to capably move the agenda forwards and no more. If only more Board members had acquired that trait we could have achieved at least the same results, but in less time! I am sure she will be a worthy holder of this office and I wish her and the Association well. But I have been immensely proud to represent the BDA both at home and abroad and, Janet, I hope you have a very special experience that, you too, will never forget.

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