

# Dental Team GB

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EDITORIAL

The London 2012 Olympics has by many measures been a triumphant success. It has brought forth some of those characteristics that might be considered to be British; fair play, exquisitely detailed organisation, creativity and (I am delighted to observe) humour.

Our own small contribution of the earlier cover series, a wry sideways look at how dentistry and the Games might co-exist, brought forth a torrent of goodwill. We have all been pleasantly surprised and happily reassured that so many readers have viewed this so positively in the spirit in which it was conceived and created. Indeed, there has not been a single dissenting voice. But this is not reported as a matter of mere self satisfaction rather as a small example of what I believe to be a mountain of positive outcomes from the Olympics which will serve us in large and small, corporate, political and personal ways in the short run and in the very long term.

Perhaps first amongst these values is that of the repeated emphasis on team work. Including the word in the GB athlete's epithet brought immediate and constant focus on the concept but winner after winner from all countries and all teams laid fundamental importance on the value of theirs in bringing them to victory. Of equal and often tear-jerking circumstance were the interviews of those who had not won and who felt the need, often not apparent to the observer who had marvelled at the recent personal achievement of that individual, that they were sorry for 'having let the team down'. These sentiments and actualities are of course familiar to us all on a daily basis in a myriad of tiny ways as we work with our teams in aspiring to deliver the best patient care that we can. It is tempting to lay the accusation of exaggeration. Surely riding, running, jumping, throwing, rowing further, faster and higher than anyone else on the planet or possibly than anyone else on the planet to date can hardly equate to preventing a cavity or placing a restoration. Are we really suggesting that the dark winter hours of sprinting in Dumfries, front-crawling in Truro or pounding the wind-swept moors of Yorkshire can be compared with the route to successful practice? Well, yes, I think to some degree they can. We all know of people whose dedication while not perhaps as dramatic as an Olympic athlete is just as Olympian in its way. Repeated at dental award ceremonies, in the literature and in personal citations such achievements are marked and respected. The aspiration to team success is unquestionably with us in dentistry and these Games should serve as an inspiration to us all to go the extra mile and make the extra difference.

## BURNING INSIDE

The other amazing element that I have personally taken from London 2012 is not to be daunted by the scale of challenges. Few of us will ever know the detailed work which must have gone into the initial bid documents and plans. More of us may be conscious of the work that has been undertaken in these past seven years since the event was awarded; however virtually all of us must now be in amazement if not awe at the technical, creative and organisational brilliance of the outcome. The scale was gargantuan but the response has been equal to it; and greater.

Such inspiration has been thin on the ground in recent times, especially in dentistry. The weight, persistence and frequently apparent irrelevance of regulation and restriction on our practices has been almost overwhelmingly tedious and seemingly infinitely wearing. Yet, for the most part, we have survived and still prosper. Perhaps the upcoming first anniversary of the pilot schemes to inform the structure of the next NHS dental contract will provide a similar opportunity to show a collaborative spirit in which to tackle what some might also see as task as great as bringing a flame from a Greek sunrise. Another factor oft repeated in the previous weeks as Team GB hoarded medal after medal was that the scale of the achievement would not have been possible without the funding provided, particularly since the advent of the Lottery. Like it or not, finance is central even if it is not absolute to successful outcomes. Whilst one commentator who asked what the nation would prefer, another gold medal or a submarine might be overstating the case while riding on gilt-powered high, the question as to where specifically our British priorities lie is a valid one. That we, quite properly, choose to celebrate 'our' NHS to the watching eyes of the world in the Opening Ceremony means we also have to heed the wisdom of the old saying 'fine words but look to your purse'.

None of this is to detract one tiny scrap from the uplifting experience that the Olympics has brought to us and which we have nurtured throughout the whole nation especially in these recent weeks. I am equally sure that we will continue to revel in this as the brave stories of the Paralympics unfold. In saluting everyone involved in this remarkable achievement we should continue to honour them by keeping the Olympic flame burning within each of us.

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