

## AROUND THE WORLD



Mystery shoppers from around the world have ranked Spain as No. 1 for smiling at their customers. The Smiling Report 2013 reports that 96% of customers in Spain received a smile from staff.



In Japan, it is tradition that when a child loses an upper or lower primary tooth it is thrown straight to the ground or straight up in the air, respectively, in the hope that the incoming adult tooth will grow through straight.



In Burlington, Wisconsin, dental practice Schneider Family Dentistry has sponsored the city's annual chocolate festival for the past decade. However, dentist Charles Schneider does not take part in the chocolate eating competitions as it is bad for his teeth.



In Cape Town, South Africa, a fashion trend spanning the last 60 years has been to remove one's front teeth to boost attractiveness. Often known as the 'Cape Flats Smile', the trend is named after the neighbourhood where this dental modification is received by a large number of teenagers.



Tabua, the polished tooth of a sperm whale, is a valued gift in ceremonial presentations in Fiji, given at birthdays, weddings and funerals. Traditionally offered as gifts for atonement or esteem (*sevusevu*), tabua even appear on the Fijian 20 cent piece.

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## IN THIS ISSUE



In this issue Assistant Editor Laura Pacey writes on the effect of the growing number of women in the dentistry workforce.

Laura is our resident 'prehistoric' dentistry news writer, having proved fond of reporting tales of fossilised animal teeth and Neanderthal diets.

Laura is a North London girl who joined the *BDJ* editorial team in late 2011 after reading classics at the University of Warwick. In her two years on the team, she admits to having become obsessed with *BDJ* house style, and wants to edit everything she sees!

**Did you know?** Laura's favourite cocktail is the Kir Royale. She has an identical twin sister called Jessica.

## INVESTIGATION

## HAVE WOMEN CHANGED THE DENTAL WORKFORCE?

James Brown claimed it's a man's world, but with the number of female dental professionals rising rapidly, it is estimated that over half of all UK dentists will be women by 2020. This raises questions over what this might mean for workforce planning and whether women really can 'have it all', balancing a family and professional life with minimal impact to dental services.

This issue is not new; at the start of the millennium Dame Margaret Seward discussed the increasing number of women in the dental workforce and its potential effects in this Journal,<sup>1</sup> but in the last five years alone the percentage of female dentists has risen by 5% and, as over 50% of dental students are now female, this trend is set to continue. The majority of dentists under the age of 35 are female (55.4%, 2011/12) while over 90% of dentists over

65 are male;<sup>2</sup> thus the greater proportion of dentists leaving the profession over the coming years will be men, while women continue to enter the workforce at a higher rate.

Despite this increase there are only two dental specialties where females hold the larger percentage of positions: paediatrics and

special care dentistry, while historically male-dominated roles such as oral surgery still retain a higher percentage of men at 72.8%.<sup>3</sup> This presents a problem, as Judith Husband, Chair of the BDA Education, Ethics and the Dental Team Working Group, argues: 'Without women in senior leadership positions throughout dentistry, it will be difficult to engage the full profession [in shaping dentistry] and a divided group is never as strong as when unified by common goals and interests.'

Yet the fact remains that male dentists currently contribute more working hours across their career and generally have fewer career breaks than females.<sup>4</sup> Thus it is perhaps understandable that men hold more senior positions than their female counterparts. It must be noted, however, that the difference between genders in working hours is minimal pre-career breaks. Women are more likely to reduce their hours upon returning to work

following a career break and the difference in hours worked between a female dentist that has and has not taken a break across a working lifespan is about 15,000.<sup>4</sup> In their 2001 study, Newton *et al.*<sup>5</sup> found that 61% of female dental practitioners had taken a career break at some point in their lives, whereas only 27% of male dentists had. Assuming that over half of female dentists under the age of 35 will take time out of their career to have children, this could lead to a shortage of dentists in the near future. Will policy change to alleviate any shortfall during women's child bearing years? Professor Tim Newton suggests 'If we wish to

WOMEN IN DENTISTRY:  
UK NUMBERS

Currently 44.5% of dentists are female

50% of all dental students are female

55.4% of dentists under the age of 35 are female

Almost 76% of dental care professionals are female

It is estimated that over half of all UK dentists will be women by 2020

**'In many ways it is up to female dentists to shape their own future, actively engaging in and contributing to the dental community'**