

ENDODONTICS: A THEMED ISSUE

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Guest Editors, *BDJ* Endodontics themed issue

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It is our pleasure to introduce this endodontically themed issue of the *British Dental Journal*. Endodontics is seen by many as being a demanding specialty, time consuming with a constant search for the magic bullet that will make treatments easier. Of course there is no special secret but an understanding of the biological basis of treatment and the role of bacteria is a good start. The challenges of clinical practice have frequently portrayed endodontics as a difficult discipline; however, often the basic fundamentals have been neglected.

Recent advances have made many aspects of treatment easier, for example rotary nickel titanium instrumentation which has arguably been a great leveller making the delivery of quality endodontic treatment easier for the general dental practitioner. The use of lighting and magnification, in particular the operating microscope, has meant that cases previously considered untreatable can be managed with confidence. The so called blind art of endodontics comes alive when using the microscope which has had an effect similar to that of the introduction of radiography in that you can see more of what you are doing and the effects of your treatment

However, despite these advances, endodontics remains very much a brain game and experience teaches us to expect the unexpected and see canals as opposed to just looking for them. The brain and fingers work together to develop tactile sense. The ability to visualise and feel in three dimensions is fundamental to the simplest of root canals and becomes increasingly important as more difficult cases are tackled.

Emphasis is frequently placed on the time it takes to complete treatment but ultimately the three aspects

'Endodontics remains very much a brain game...'

of cost, time and quality come into play. If the price is fixed then the time has to be varied to maintain the quality or if time is your master then ultimately quality will suffer.

The aim of the articles in this *BDJ* themed issue is to provide contemporary knowledge, some of which may be new to the reader, and also to reinforce old concepts with current and more advanced knowledge. Infection remains the old enemy and is fundamental to the aetiology of endodontic disease. In the battle against infection, in the days of enhanced infection control, asepsis is fundamental. Discussions on endodontics frequently revolve around the latest gadget that is going to make our practising lives easier, or debates around working length and apical patency or accessory canals. Sometimes the fundamentals can be forgotten with debatable teachings and misunderstandings reinforced. Hopefully, we have addressed some of these in this issue.

We have tried to be comprehensive and inclusive in our approach within the space available. The very topical endodontic/implant interface is addressed by Bill Saunders and Peter Heasman considers the association between pulpal infection and periodontal disease. The key aspects of contemporary endodontic treatment that are access, preparation, irrigation and obturation each have a separate paper allocated with Nick Adams and Phil Tomson covering access, Mike Waplington and Andy McRobert preparation and Nectaria Polycarpou and Rachel Tomson obturation.

Marcus Haapasalo, one of our international contributors, has contributed an update on the important area of irrigation which covers both solutions and modes of

delivery. Key to endodontic success is preservation of remaining tooth structure and Francesco Mannocci and Jonathan Cowie discuss the adhesive restoration of endodontically treated teeth whilst Trevor Burke presents research which addresses the influence of root fillings on direct and indirect restoration survival. Endodontic treatment done well has high success and survival rates but unfortunately is not successful all of the time. Jose Siquera and co-authors discuss the causes and management of post-treatment apical periodontitis, and Chong and John Rhodes address endodontic surgery.

As we have outlined above, endodontics is considered a difficult subject to master, and it has over the years been considered a 'Cinderella subject' in undergraduate education. The increasing demand by patients to save teeth through endodontic treatment and the rise in the recognition of endodontics as a specialty have also led to increasing student awareness and their recognition of the need to gain as much as experience as they can.

Alison Qualtrough has presented many of the challenges that undergraduate endodontic education faces. Undergraduate students represent the future of our profession and Alan Gluskin, Ove and Christine Peters challenge some of the prevailing paradigms in their paper on minimally invasive endodontics.

Last but not least, pulp therapy is taught widely to dental students but is often not considered as a treatment option post qualification. Tony Smith and Stéphane Simon consider the current research that should enhance our current understanding on the subject which is not simply an option for very young or trauma patients.

DOI: 10.1038/sj.bdj.2014.207