

Valedictory address

Peter V. Dyer

BDA President 2017/18

Ladies and gentlemen, colleagues. I am sure that I am not the first President to wonder where the last twelve months have gone. I recall Stuart Johnston telling me rather wistfully about some of his experiences and how much he had enjoyed his presidency.

There is no doubt that this has been a most remarkable year and I am honoured to have been asked to carry out the duties of President. I think, however, it is important at the start of this address to recall the awful event that preceded the BDA conference last year. The world was shocked at the callousness of the outrage that affected so many young people and their families. However, I would like to pay tribute to the people of Manchester for their courage and resilience during the days and weeks afterwards. I was proud of their response and I was proud at the response of the BDA and the dental profession, which showed its support for the city in a very visible manner.

As you may have gathered I chose for my theme as President the notion of professionalism and what it means to be a member of the dental profession. I have had the good fortune to travel the length and breadth of the United Kingdom meeting students, young and established dentists working in many different branches of dentistry. I have been left in awe at the commitment shown by so many for their chosen profession and have also been struck by the great affection and respect shown for the BDA. I have also had the pleasure to travel overseas representing our organisation. It is clear from the conversations that I have had with dentists in other countries that the challenges that we are facing are repeated elsewhere.

At my inauguration I quoted one of my predecessors who recognised the Association as one of the three pillars that make up a profession and I think he would feel confident that it continues to represent the members in many different ways. We clinicians are extremely lucky to have such a talented team at the BDA

and I would like to record my thanks for all that they do on a daily basis for us.

However, you will also know that I have concerns for the future of our profession. Change maybe inevitable but that needs to be carefully managed with full discussion with the profession before any irretrievable step is taken. We await the outcome of the government's consultation into professional regulation. It is to be hoped that they have noted that we would like to have a dedicated regulator; one that allows dentists to continue to deliver a high quality service to patients in an environment free from blame if a mistake is



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made – an environment in which we can learn as individuals and collectively as a profession.

This building in Wimpole Street acts as a very strong symbol for the profession and one that is recognised at home and abroad. One of my duties this year was to welcome colleagues and staff to an event celebrating the 50th anniversary of the BDA at Number 64. The Queen as you know is our Patron and had opened the building in 1967. She similarly honoured the profession in 2017 by writing to congratulate us on our anniversary and to wish us all the best for the future. At the recent celebration we were treated to a video of that occasion and a trip down memory lane of 1960s dentistry from our Museum collection.

As well as the scheduled presidential duties there were a number of unexpected but happy coincidences, which will add to my memories of the year. I hope you will forgive me if I share just one or two with you. At the

first dental student lecture, I completed my slide presentation and as the students left I noticed one approaching me. She mentioned a slide I had shown of a few British and Irish dental students at an international conference in Helsinki in 1982. It transpired that one of the students on the picture was her mother. At the FDI conference in Madrid it was a huge pleasure to meet up with a number of dentists with whom I had attended conferences in the past and who I had not seen for many years. Finally, through the network that is dentistry, I have been in touch with friends in many parts of the world. The opportunity

to make contact with so many people has added to my belief that being a member of the BDA brings so many added benefits and is an important part of being in a profession.

I am grateful to the NW Branch for their nomination and my family who have got used to picking me up or dropping me off at our local train station at unusual times of the day. The year would not however have been nearly so well organised without the huge amount of work carried out on my behalf by Alison Magee at the BDA. Alison has patiently got me to the right place at the right time and with clear instructions about whether I should be wearing a dinner jacket or a lounge suit.

I have no doubt that the BDA will continue to represent its members in a strong, considered and decisive manner. I am so delighted that Susie Sanderson is our next President, an honour she fully deserves and one in which she will excel. Thank you. ■

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