

we avoid a postcode lottery for dentistry if this attitude is replicated across the country and remains unchanged? A chief executive said to me 'We aim to be a starred PCT Ian, and there are no stars in dentistry'. That PCT is still resolutely refusing to have any engagement with its local dentists.

But why should PCTs take an interest? In their 3-year plans each PCT had to address performance under some 80 trajectories, not one of the trajectories referred to dentistry. Similarly, the recently published expenditure report on delivering the NHS Plan fails to mention dentistry at all. From my perspective, taking the NHS as a whole, the danger is that dentistry could still end up left out in the cold. And yet it is, or perhaps used to be, the service that has the most daily contacts with the general public. We heard from John Renshaw this afternoon about what is happening in the political arena and the BDA plans for supporting dentists through this phase. The plans for the modernisation of NHS dentistry are not without merit; indeed in many ways they are a real attempt to bring in dentistry from the cold. But they will fail if not accompanied by proper levels of investment and the pay and conditions required to keep dentists in the NHS. It will be essential for us all to support the BDA executive with a unity of purpose to achieve our goals, for what has been said elsewhere, 'What is good for dentists will be good for patients', remains essentially true.

Integration of dentistry into the broader NHS is very important in terms of how we think about dentistry, or rather how we must encourage others to think about it. It is still too often seen as an optional extra, detached from real health issues. When I first got to Warwickshire I was asked to write the oral health chapter of the Public Health report. When I suggested that there should not be one, but

rather that dentistry should appear under inequalities, cancer, health promotion, smoking cessation and any other peg I could think of to hang it on, I was met with surprise. But why? There was no other chapter proposed on a part of the body as if it was a stand-alone part, it is as if oral health is in some way optional and needs its own chapter so that non-dental readers can ignore it.

The NHS makes a big play about inequalities, as it should, but then far too often ignores them with respect to dentistry. Who cares that it is nearly impossible in some areas for elderly residents of care homes to get dental treatment, or that in many areas of the country NHS full dentures are virtually unobtainable? We are knowledgeable about the dmf of five year olds, but who cares about the elderly with limited incomes? What do we know of their treatment needs? Who cares about those with learning disabilities and special needs who cannot be treated effectively in the GDS, where it is available? There are many excellent community dental services caring for these vulnerable patients but they are commonly under resourced and too often under valued by their employers, particularly when it comes to allocating theatre time in competition with more high profile specialties or funding for the refurbishment of clinics.

The link between dental health and general health has always been central to my philosophy as a dentist. It also informs BDA policy work in a growing number of areas: older people, children, homeless people and fluoridation. This is important work in itself - oral health inequalities persist - but it is also important in order to get the idea of integration across - and to ram home those words of the Teviot Committee written sixty years ago:

'Dentistry is not an adjunct, but an organic part of health.'

How forward looking, proactive and successful the BDA is through its Chief Executive, Executive Board, and Rep Body...

Valedictory address

Professor Ian Benington OBE was installed as the President of the British Dental Association at last year's British and Irish Dental Associations' Annual Conference in Belfast 2002. At this year's 2003 British Dental Association's Annual Conference in Manchester on April 24-26, 2003, he gave his valedictory address.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Members of the BDA, Colleagues and Friends, I have, somewhat reluctantly, come to the end of what has been, without doubt, the most exciting and fulfilling year of my professional life. The excitement has emanated from the privileged task of travelling world-wide to fulfil the many kind invitations I have received to visit dental associations and branches abroad and at home, and at

the same time, carrying out what was feasible of my job at Queens University Belfast Dental School. Throughout my hectic travels I have been keenly aware of the great privilege and honour which was bestowed on me by the BDA and I thank them for their unfailing support for myself and for my wife Eileen. I reiterate my sincere thanks to the Northern Ireland Branch of the BDA whose loyalty and trust permitted

me to carry out this wonderful ambassadorial role. Had it not been for the generosity of Queens University Belfast and my colleagues at the Dental School, I could not have contemplated or, indeed, carried out my presidential duties.

At the culmination of this wonderful year I reflect with interest on the diversity of the presidential role: extending from light-hearted presentations to undergraduates in the dental schools accentuating the importance of BDA membership, to scientific presentations to various dental associations including the Hong Kong Dental Association and a seminar and lecture to The Prince Philip Dental School, and proposing toasts to many vibrant branches of the BDA in the UK. I must say that during the year I have found that colleagues' expectations of the president as the profession's ambassador both nationally and internationally are very high and this reflects directly the great esteem in which the BDA is held throughout the world. I am aware of the considerable demands undertaken as a result of these expectations, but it has been a great personal joy to have taken part in the social and scientific aspects of dental associations' programmes at home and abroad; meeting colleagues and friends, exchanging professional views, enjoying hospitality at many branch dinners and dances and naturally, of course, an occasional party! I thank all my colleagues at home and abroad for all their generosity, wonderful friendship and hospitality – it has been a privilege and great fun.

In my Presidential Address, and again at the New Year, I alluded to the significant changes taking place in dentistry particularly in the primary care sector. *Options for Change* predictably will take much longer than a short presidential year to come to fruition and, indeed, I have to ask – in that time, are the public any nearer to getting what they are entitled to – finding quality dental care at a price which they can afford on their doorstep. I am not aware of any optimism that the Government is going to provide increased NHS resource to solve the present problems of supplying a quality NHS service for those who require it.

Furthermore, I am certain that undergraduate dental education is under great pressure to deliver quality education at grass roots level to the required GDC standards. Academic recruitment is at an all time low as cited in my New Year Address, this is a sad reflection of the Government's poor investment in the universities described in the *Economist*, November 16 2002 'The Ruin of British Universities' and dentistry is by no means an exception, perhaps the rule. This can only be corrected by a government



and university strategy to increase funding for the undergraduate schools investing in the future of quality undergraduate education.

On a more optimistic note, as I have been privileged to be deeply involved in the boiler house of the BDA for the past year – I have realised how forward looking, proactive and successful the BDA is through its Chief Executive, Executive Board, and Rep Body in responding successfully to issues that have arisen both through the Government and media. We have all applauded the successful recruitment drive where the profession has voted with its feet to achieve a record membership of 21,000 plus, reflecting their trust in an organisation that supports them with a superb service. The Executive have worked hard and successfully in supporting

Options for Change, and responding to the Audit Commission report on dentistry and the Office of Fair Trading report on the private dental market. The overall success of the organisation is also reflected in the success of its publications, the *BDJ* and the *BDA News* now at record levels. These successes demand that every dentist should be proud to be a member of the BDA and we are working to achieve that!

The BDA is in good hands and equally good heart, and I wish to reiterate my sincere thanks to the Events Working Group and members of staff for their robust and efficient efforts on my behalf throughout the year. To Karen Robinson for all her help in organising my programme, and my secretary at the Dental School, Sally Meenan, without whom I could not have achieved the demands of a very busy year. Finally, but most certainly not least, my heartfelt thanks to my wife Eileen for all her hard work and support of myself and the Association.

To conclude, it is my great pleasure to return to the 2003 conference in Manchester 'Embracing Change' and induct my successor Ian McIntyre who qualified from Durham University following the award of an RAF Undergraduate Cadetship. Ian's career achieved meteoric rise through the RAF to the exalted position of Air Vice-Marshal in February 1997. Retiring from the RAF he succeeded to the post of Consultant in Dental Public Health in the Solihull and Warwickshire Dental Health Authorities. Ian has also been a great supporter of the BDA and, more recently, Chairman of the Benevolent Fund. He has been a tower of strength to the profession and has lectured extensively at home and abroad in his subject. It therefore gives me the greatest possible pleasure to induce Ian McIntyre as the 117th President of the BDA and congratulate him and wish him and his charming wife, Joan, a successful and enjoyable year.