



Editor-in-Chief's letter



'Oral health must be considered in conjunction with general health'; 'it's time to put the mouth back into the body...' – these are statements that are being quoted regularly nowadays by most stakeholders across the oral and dental health profession. The government's ten-year NHS health plan published just recently also highlights a positive shift away from 'treating disease' to 'preventing disease'. Myself and others in the profession have long been calling for this paradigm shift away from an essentially 'national illness service' to a real 'national health service'.

A treatment-based healthcare service is not fundamentally sustainable long term, both economically or socio-ecologically. Attitudes across all oral health stakeholder groups need to change, from policy makers to funders, from clinicians to the public, from industry partners to regulators. Let's move away from the treatment question: "What is the matter with you?" to "What matters to you?" Prevention in all its forms needs to be incentivised by and to all stakeholder groups. Oral health prevention messaging needs to be consistent, engaging, supportive, deliverable and pragmatic for members of the public to appreciate its value. Let's not forget, 90% of prevention has to be effective with personal 'at-home' care. It's a two-way facilitation process, between patients and the oral healthcare team. This is where the role of the oral healthcare team members in oral health education, facilitation, empowerment and promotion becomes critical. Positive messaging, personalised achievable goal setting and motivation to empower the patient and caregivers, as opposed to simply 'educating/lecturing' them, is pivotal in the psychology of behaviour change. Our profession has not been all that successful in doing this to date.

There is a real public need to value and appreciate the importance of preventing oral disease and its implications to general health. The excellent articles in this issue of *BDJ Team* outline several aspects of the key roles different members of the oral healthcare team play in this regard and the importance of this aspect of oral healthcare delivery, using the best practice minimum intervention oral care (MIOC) framework to do this.

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