

Moreover, the BDA has stressed that overseas qualified dentists are no more willing to work within England's failed, underfunded NHS dental system. It has reiterated that any solution to the current crisis rests on meaningful reform, underpinned by sustainable funding, together with a long term, genuinely sustainable approach to workforce planning.

In England, the funding allocated to NHS dentistry is now nearly all being spent on care.

Therefore, if there is to be any additional NHS care provided by new registrants, it will require further investment that the Government has so far been unwilling to provide. Otherwise, there will be no NHS work for these dentists to perform. The changes include a rather modest increase to UK dental student numbers – which will not start to impact until 2032 – but the BDA has also expressed concern that there needs to be the academic workforce within UK dental schools and NHS training places

to support this expansion. It warns that it will be challenging to upscale to address all these issues for both UK students and overseas qualified dentists.

BDA Chair Eddie Crouch said: 'This seismic change to the dental workforce feels like a quick fix [...] Ultimately, it doesn't matter whether a dentist qualifies in Manchester or Mumbai. We won't keep talent working within a failed, underfunded NHS system without real change.'

## CONFERENCE REPORT

# BARDES 2025: Caring Beyond the Chair

By Professor Barry F. A. Quinn, University of Liverpool, Liverpool, UK

The British Alliance of Researchers in Dental Education and Scholarship (BARDES) held its 2025 annual meeting at the University of Lancashire in Preston in November, under the title 'Caring Beyond the Chair', bringing together dental education researchers, clinicians and scholars from across the UK and beyond to share innovations in teaching, learning and assessment. The programme foregrounded themes of professionalism, wellbeing and responsibility, with a strong emphasis on how dental educators can better support students as developing professionals and as people.

Established to 'connect and support dental education researchers and scholars to deliver an evidence base that informs the future delivery of exceptional dental education', BARDES continues to provide a forum for the development and dissemination of rigorous educational research. The Alliance aims to facilitate connectivity between providers of undergraduate and postgraduate dental education programmes, develop communities of practice, offer networking opportunities through conferences and its web presence, and support members via access to expertise, mentorship and academic resources.

Among the standout presentations in Preston was 'Conscientiousness – the Holy Grail of measuring professionalism' by Professor John C. McLachlan, which explored the concept of conscientiousness as a potential proxy for professionalism and examined how reliably it can be recognised, nurtured and assessed in dental students. This session stimulated considerable debate about the validity, fairness and educational



Past and current Presidents of BARDES in attendance, left to right Professor Barry F. A. Quinn, University of Liverpool, Professor Vivian Binnie, University of Glasgow, Dr Claudia Cunningham, University of Lancashire, Professor Janice Ellis, Newcastle University, Dr Melanie Nasseripour, King's College London and Dr Francesca Mullins, Newcastle University

impact of different approaches to measuring professional behaviours.

Another powerful contribution came from Professor John Gibson, whose talk 'Suicide: how could I possibly save a life?' addressed the critical issue of mental health and suicide awareness in dentistry. Framed around the responsibilities and limits of clinicians and educators, the session highlighted warning signs, communication strategies and the importance of compassionate, proactive engagement with colleagues and students who may be at risk.

The conference also showcased student-led scholarship. Year 3 dental students from the University of Liverpool – Tina Bhardwaj and Sanchi Mogla – were awarded the Janice Ellis Award for their work, 'Burnout and Stress in Dental Students: A Literature Review'. Their project, supervised by Dr Claire Newey, University of Liverpool, drew attention to the prevalence, drivers and consequences of

burnout in undergraduate dental education and underscored the need for systemic, curriculum-level approaches to promoting student wellbeing.

The event was also a significant moment in the Association's history, with six past and current BARDES Presidents in attendance, captured together in the conference photograph (pictured), symbolising continuity and collective leadership within the community.

Together, these contributions exemplified the spirit of Caring Beyond the Chair, highlighting how dental education research can inform more humane, reflective and supportive learning environments, both within and beyond the clinical setting. The next BARDES annual conference will take place in Newcastle, UK, on 5–6 November 2026 under the theme 'Belonging in Dentistry'. Further details and updates are available via <https://bardesoofficial.com>.