

**BASCD 2023 ABSTRACT #02****General dental practitioners' experience of the pandemic in Scotland: implications for policy***Mackie, C.S.,<sup>1\*</sup> and Devlin, A.M.<sup>2</sup>**<sup>1</sup>NHS Tayside, Scotland, UK; <sup>2</sup>University of Glasgow, Scotland, UK***Background:**

NHS dentistry in the UK has contributed to population oral health for decades. Early career General Dental Practitioners (GDPs) are crucial to NHS dentistry and their health and wellbeing is important for their retention. The pandemic presented a unique set of challenges to this cohort. This is one of the first qualitative studies designed to gain a deeper understanding of GDPs' experiences of the pandemic in order to inform policy development.

**Objectives:**

To investigate the impact of the pandemic on the health and wellbeing of early career (male and female) GDPs in Scotland. In addition, to explore their perceptions of how this was linked to the interventions implemented within dentistry in Scotland.

**Methods:**

Exploratory qualitative research study. Early career GDPs (n=10) were recruited purposively (n=5 males and n=5 females) from six different Scottish Health Board regions and were <35 years of age and with >55% NHS commitment as a GDP. Semi-structured interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim and inductive thematic analysis carried out using QSR NVivo 12 software. Ethical approval was granted by the University of Glasgow.

**Results:**

Data analysis resulted in four emergent themes. The impact of the pandemic on professional practice; personal lifestyle; finances and remuneration; communication and guidance. Although some positive impacts on lifestyle were noted, participants reported increased stress, anxiety and frustration related to a lack of clear communication, complex and conflicting guidance, and financial uncertainty related to "top-up" payments. They also considered the NHS funding model to be no longer fit for purpose.

**Conclusions:**

The retention of NHS dentists plays a key role in addressing oral health inequalities, but their own health and wellbeing was impacted adversely by the pandemic. Therefore, findings and recommendations from this study (including the need for reform) should be considered if future oral health policy goals are to be achieved.

**Correspondence to:**

Christopher Mackie

Email: christopher.mackie2@nhs.scot

[https://doi.org/10.1922/CDH\\_BASCD23\\_Abstract02](https://doi.org/10.1922/CDH_BASCD23_Abstract02)