



Valedictory Editorial: The past six years

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Fifty years ago this month I graduated from the University of Liverpool. A few months earlier, along with three friends, I had driven overland to attend the International Dental Students Congress held that year in Israel. On the way we drove the spectacular road from Beirut up to Damascus, visited Petra in the Southern Jordanian desert, at that time devoid of tourists, viewed the Chagall windows in the synagogue on the Hadassah University Medical campus, and listened to the world cup final with a group of German students in a youth hostel overlooking the Mandelbaum Gate. Little did we know that within twelve months these beautiful countries and their kind people would be plunged into war and that this conflict and chaos would continue to haunt this region, almost unabated, for the next fifty years.

In contrast the European Union has provided an international model for conflict resolution and good-neighbourliness, and I am sad that my country has opted out. I suppose that if there were any silver lining in this decision it would be the fact that millions of marginalised people living in small post-industrial towns in the North, in the mining valleys of South Wales and in our coastal communities have found a voice, and they continue to celebrate. Whether the promised increase in well paid and secure jobs, the promised increase in health care for their ageing parents, the promised increase in school places, and the promised increase in fish-stocks in our coastal waters ever materialise, remains to be seen.

Community Dental Health for its part has tried to make a contribution, albeit a modest contribution, to international collaboration. Over the past six years as Editor we have published papers from China, Russia and the United States; from Iran, Iraq, Israel and Syria; from Australasia, Japan, India and Thailand; from Africa, South America, and from most of Europe. I am grateful to the authors of these papers for entrusting us with their work. I am also indebted to the hundreds of reviewers who have donated their time, energy and skill to refining these papers. The support of the British Association for the Study of Community Dentistry and the European Association for Dental Public Health has been unwavering.

Looking back over these past six years of my editorship I would highlight four particular issues of the journal. Early in 2011 and again in 2012 the Borrow Foundation kindly provided us with funding to publish expanded issues of the journal, so allowing us to rein in the lengthening time between submission, acceptance and a paper's appearance

in print; this now stands at less than eleven months from submission and less than seven months from acceptance.

I had become particularly concerned with the lack of input from social science, one of the basic sciences of public health. Indeed, earlier this year I had been planning to invite Professor Barry Gibson of the University of Sheffield to contribute an editorial on the topic when, out of the blue, came a proposal from Lisa Jamieson from the University of Adelaide. Lisa was organising a symposium on “*A sociological and anthropological perspective on oral health inequalities*” at the upcoming IADR meeting in Seoul, and asked us to consider publishing the proceedings including two contributions from Barry Gibson. This we were delighted to do in the July issue of the journal alongside an introduction by Jamieson (2016).

In the following issue we were able to reprint an article by Professor Peter James, originally published in the *British Dental Journal*, in which James (1966) argued that dental schools should follow the lead of the Scottish schools and introduce dental public health into their undergraduate curriculum. The paper was accompanied by a contribution from Professor Ivor Chestnutt (2016) outlining progress in the discipline over the subsequent fifty years. The James paper along with the accompanying papers by Phil Holloway, Geoffrey Slack and Denis Berman convinced me, and possibly others, that an academic career in dental public health in the UK was a viable option, a decision I have never regretted. To also have had the privilege of serving as Editor of *Community Dental Health* over these past six years has proved a fitting coda.

It remains for me to thank the Editorial Board for their input to the journal over the past six years, to thank Dr Michael Smith for his outstanding and dedicated contribution, and finally to wish my friends and colleagues Professor Peter Robinson and Mrs Jan Vicary, the incoming editorial team, every success as they guide the journal over the next years.

References

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