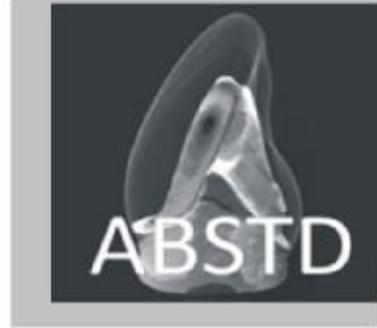


# Association of Basic Science Teachers in Dentistry Newsletter - Christmas 2017



## President's Message

This year has been mixed. There have been successes, but there are other areas in which we have not been able to achieve all we would have liked. With regard to the former, it gives great pleasure to announce that the winner of our first 'Prize Essay' competition was Ms Kai (Kimberly) Ng of Kings College London. The London Oral Biology Club (LOBC) made us very welcome at their November meeting, and generously gave us an opportunity to present Kimberly with her award. Simultaneously, Jeff O'Sullivan arranged for a Certificate of Commendation to be presented to Ms Rebecca Ngo of Trinity College Dublin as runner up.



The three judges, all leaders in different disciplines within the oral biosciences and each representing a different national jurisdiction, noted that every entrant to the competition had put a great deal of effort into preparing their entry and each deserved congratulations and a vote of thanks. Our plan is to run an essay competition every alternate year, so there is no competition in 2017/2018. For the next

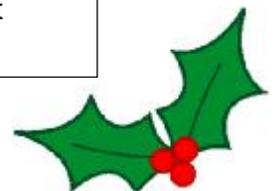
competition in 2018/2019. I hope that, for the next competition there will be entrants, not only from professional courses in Dentistry but also from those studying for entry to the newer oral healthcare professions, Dental Therapy and Hygiene and Dental Technology.

On a more serious note, our AGM in Plymouth was not quorate. Our current constitution requires 15 voting members to be present for the meeting to place. If the Association is to succeed, we need to elect new committee members (including the position of President) so that these posts rotate. Our constitution is now out of date on several counts and needs to be re-drafted to reflect the contemporary situation. For example, we need to explore the way we elect our officers, possibly moving to an online voting system following the lead of organisations like the British or International Associations for Dental Research. These issues, which are central to the future of the Association, require discussion and approval at an AGM if they are to be actioned. Our Hon Secretary/Treasurer is currently exploring options for a Spring Meeting/AGM. Details will follow when available.

In the meantime, a very happy Christmas to everyone and the very best wishes for a prosperous and peaceful New Year

## Subscriptions

Following introduction of a subscription-less membership we are no longer collecting an annual subscription. So, if paying by 'Standing Order' please could you arrange to cancel this order. Unfortunately, our Bank will not permit us to do so - this has to be done by you.



## *ABSTD Plymouth: 5<sup>th</sup> September 2017*

This was a small meeting arranged as a Satellite session to the British Society for Oral and Dental research meeting which followed immediately afterwards. The meeting had a strong teaching emphasis. Mr Kamran Ali, an academic Oral Surgeon from Plymouth, emphasised that clinical skills need to be underpinned by basic science and that, in contemporary curricula, the BMS component sometimes lacked clinical contextualisation. Henk Brand from ACTA commented that sometimes, BMS becomes diluted because of the need to present it in a clinical context. Thus, we are faced with something of a paradox.

Tracy Collett, a Sociologist with a special interest in Sociology as applied to Medical Education introduced us to the idea of the 'hidden curriculum', that what we do and the way we act can influence students just as much as the formal material we are presenting. In a dental curriculum, recognising this and integrating clinical, biomedical and social sciences can give a very positive message about the equal value of each subject.

Andreea Didilescu from Bucharest, who had recently completed a year at Harvard, emphasised the need to support academic staff development by offering them protected time for career development and research. Finally, Jane Collingwood, also from Plymouth, introduced us to the potential use of 3D printing technologies in teaching. For example, by developing 3D printed teeth for use in dental clinical skills teaching.

Once the formal part of the meeting was over we convened in a restaurant sited in the old Plymouth Gin distillery for a meal.

## *The Evolving Dental Curriculum*

This section was prompted by an e-mail from Colin Robinson, and circulated to some of us by Marcello Riggio, our Membership Secretary.

Colin pointed out that many undergraduate dental courses have moved away from traditional divisions into anatomy physiology biochemistry to be replaced by a somewhat '*bewildering array*' of subject areas covering this material. Indeed, in many circumstances it is difficult to understand exactly what is now provided and how this is being achieved. This flags a valuable point. If we don't have clear divisions between subject areas, there is a possibility that some may become lost from the curriculum to the detriment of our students.

He also flagged the ongoing requirement for the continuing education presentations for practitioners focussing on the basic science underpinning current and future treatments, for example, caries or tooth whitening. My experience is similar, which prompts enquiry into the extent to which this material is presented in a contextualised manner which students will remember in some undergraduate curricula. Colin's students were lucky to have been taught by someone with his experience and enthusiasm. But, sadly, as more teaching gets delegated or devolved, the chances of students missing out on this type of learning increases.

Whilst elements of the Dental Curriculum can be, and frequently are, contracted out, this works better if there is a Department of Oral Biosciences or the equivalent to inform and guide the process. Therefore, we must, as part of our mission, emphasise the importance of retaining units dedicated specifically to the Oral Biosciences as a central part of every dental school structure.

### **Forthcoming Meetings**

- *ABSTD Spring Meeting (to include re-scheduled AGM) – University of Dundee date TBA – April 2018*
- *ADEE 44th Annual Meeting: Oslo, Norway (22nd-24th August 2018)*

