Valedictory Speech by Hazel Coey BADN President 2017-19

It has been an honour and a privilege to be the President of this wonderful association for the last 2 years. It has also been a challenge, and a big commitment, which I am sure Jacqui, our new President will relish, and honour.

In the past two years, I have been asked to give my support to groups, such as the Sugar Tax lobby, CQC, Alcohol and the brief advice strategy and HPV Action, to name a few. Fighting HPV is something that is close to my heart, as I have known people with mouth, head and neck cancer, and seen what devastation this can cause. I have 3 grandsons, who will benefit from the HPV vaccination programme being rolled out to all our boys.

I have also given my opinions on many GDC Consultations, such as their recent Corporate Strategy, Complaints handling, and Lifelong learning.

Dental nurses play a pivotal role in dental teams, with over 57,000 registered with the GDC. We make up the largest registrant group, with all the other DCPs, totalling only 12,000. There are 42,000 Dentists on the register.

However, of this large group, we have the least sway, or say, as there is only 1 dental nurse on the GDC Council. I have often asked myself why is this? And I believe that as new registrants, just over 11 years, since our registration, and we must make our presence and our voices heard to the other registrants and our regulating body.

How can this be achieved? I believe only by coming together in this association, and slowly but surely raising the bar, as a professional group. Our efforts to encourage BADN members have often gone on deaf ears or replies to my question about joining…. what do I get out of it? What’s in it for me?

My response is always; if we join, we have a voice, and we will be heard.

The annual retention fee is just one such contentious issue, but we were consulted, and we did reply, attend meetings at the GDC, and presented a strong voice, and a good case. The GDC were about to reduce the registration fees for dentists and increase them for DCPs. However, following on from our strong voice, they have now, slightly reduced the ARF, by £2.00 for DCPs.

I have, as President, been asked to join DCP groups…but my stance is always the same…I am a dental nurse…. we are the largest registrant group, and I stand for them. The more that we are pushed towards DCP membership rather than dental nurses, we immediately fall into the category of the possibility of being a Hygienist, Therapist, Technician etc., all of whom are paid far more than dental nurses, and far above the minimum wage. (currently £8.25 per hour).

Dental nurses are predominately female, often with children, may have carer responsibilities, and possibly working part time. Although we at BADN recognise these issues, to date the GDC have all
but ignored these facts. That is why we must make our case, join as professionals, in our own right, and be proud to say that we are dental nurses...not ‘I am just a dental nurse’!

However, in my long career, I have seen dental nurses prove that they are a force to be reckoned with, by reaching high educational attainments; post qualifications, Degrees, Masters, some working towards PhDs, and we also have the first Dental Dean, who is a dental nurse registrant.

Achievements indeed, and something that BADN has been encouraging and innovatively supporting through our education strategy. In recent years many of us, have been recognised as dental nurses for our unstinting work for the dental profession. I myself, was honoured, to receive an NEBDN Special recognition award for my role in education and training, in November last year.

We are all volunteers on the Executive Committee, doing our best to make BADN, work for you, our members. Our mission statement is to empower dental nurses, to advocate and advance the role of dental nursing; This cannot be achieved without the support of our Executive Committee, and my thanks go to Jane, Joan and Jacqui who work so tirelessly for us. Thanks also, to our staff who work hard and loyally, at HQ, Shirley, Val and Adam, not forgetting our able Chief Executive, Pam.

Looking forward, there are more opportunities than there have ever been for dental nurses to become involved in their own professional development. Opportunities for advancing your career. My own started by simply taking a part time post as a (train yourself), dental nurse, when I had a young family.

I grasped every opportunity to advance in the dental profession, by completing my Dental Nurse Certificate, followed by a post qualification in Oral Health Education, furthered on by education and teaching qualifications...and here I am today?

As I leave my post as President today, I ask you all to try your best to encourage all dental nurses in your teams to join our association. You too, can support us, with becoming involved, its easy...we welcome anyone who would like to play a part. Just complete the nomination forms, in our journal, or email your ideas or suggestions to us. We want to hear from you. It’s why we are here.

So... could you...please get involved, you are already halfway there, just by being here, at the National Dental Nursing Conference, today!

Thanks for attending...I am sure that you will learn a lot, meet new friends, catch up with old ones, and most of all, enjoy it!