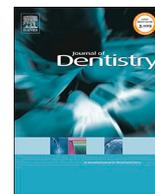


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Editorial

Focus on leadership in academic dentistry



It has been a pleasure working with Mahesh Verma and Chris Lynch to bring together and edit this issue of the Journal of Dentistry on leadership in academic dentistry. We are indebted to all the contributors for their carefully crafted contributions, making up what is believed to be a unique collection of papers on different aspects of leadership in academic dentistry. It has been a privilege to work on this project and to interact with such an august team of authors. It is hoped that this issue of the Journal of Dentistry will serve to support colleagues in leadership positions and encourage future leaders of academic dentistry, many of whom should be women, to acquire and develop the necessary skills and experience, and thereby built confidence in aiming for leadership roles.

Good leadership is critical to the success of an organisation. As highlighted in this issue of informative papers, leadership is about influencing individuals and groups and providing opportunities to achieve positive outcomes and goals. Given the many, different challenges which are anticipated to face academic dentistry in the foreseeable future, high quality leadership is a 'must' if academic dentistry is to realise its potential in healthcare education, training and research, let alone help effect much-needed improvements in oral health and ensure the rightful place of oral healthcare in future general health and social care provision.

Furthermore, the vision of leaders in academic dentistry must be increasingly all-inclusive and global, if the individuals and groups they lead are to succeed and be effective in meeting future multicultural and otherwise diverse needs and expectations. The authors of the papers, who worked independently and largely according to their personal wishes and style, individually and collectively reinforce such thinking, albeit with some variation in emphasis and approach. This variation highlights that one approach to leadership will not suite all situations and, in turn, organisations may, from time to time, need leadership refinement or change. Dynamic organisations in dynamic environments

need dynamic leaders and leadership to sustain effectiveness.

Gone are the days there is good cause to appoint an academic, whose experience of leadership may, for example, be limited to what has been gleaned from managing a small unit or team, into a key leadership position, to then be left to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge by trial and error 'on the job'. Such action is bad for the person, bad for those being led and carries a high risk of at least a period of suboptimal use of hard-pressed resources. Instruction in leadership should be included in all levels of dental education and training, and there should be many more opportunities for aspiring leaders to attend courses in leadership. Such courses can be costly, but no highly successful, ambitious organisation regrets prudent investment in good leadership training.

What I have included in this editorial is but a 'taster' of the authoritative insights, thought-provoking views and expert guidance peppered throughout the papers in this special issue of the Journal of Dentistry. As expected, and despite my extensive experience in senior leadership positions in academic dentistry, I learnt a great deal in leading the initiative to produce the following series of papers. It is to be hoped that those who read this issue, ideally cover-to-cover will share my experience and join me in believing that it is time to give more consideration to the provision of high quality leadership in academic dentistry.

Special thanks are extended to Chris Lynch in his role as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Dentistry for agreeing to publish a special issue on leadership in academic dentistry, and to the Journal of Dentistry production team at Elsevier for their invaluable help and support.

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