

General Dental Council
37 Wimpole Street
London
W1G 8DQ

6th July 090

Dear Mr Rudkin

On April 25th I published the editorial in the BDJ entitled "A Black Swan?" in which I briefly review the current understanding of the aetiology of malocclusion and suggested that debate should be held on the subject. 1937 is the last time that the GDC held a debate on the aetiology of malocclusion and I believe that, given the advances in science over the last 70 years, it has high time that we consider hold such a debate once again. Especially as so much evidence has been published over this period which suggests that the predominant cause of malocclusion is environmental.

Current orthodontic practice and teaching in Britain is predominantly palliative in nature, where forces applied to the teeth to move them into alignment, and is based therefore on the historic presumption of a genetic cause. Treatment should obviously reflect cause, and if it can be to be shown that malocclusion is largely or entirely caused by the environment then it would suggest that current orthodontics does not reflect this cause, and treatment may not be evidence based. Indeed if it can be shown that the predominant cause is environmental, then a very different treatment strategy would be required.

It is obviously very serious for any profession to find that such a dramatic change in direct is required and it should not be considered without a thorough debate and examination of all the supporting evidence. I do not expect anyone, let alone the GDC, to accept this argument without due consideration, but I do expect the argument at least to be heard and given due consideration. The GDC is entrusted to support the interests of the public in an even and unbiased manner and would be hard put to argue that there is not adequate evidence to justify a debate that would be so obviously in the best interests of the public.

It is natural to quote evidence that corroborates your argument rather than what invalidates it, leading to a tendency to ignore inconvenient facts. Despite the weight of evidence supporting an environmental aetiology these papers are largely ignored by proponents of a philosophy that is based on a genetic aetiology. The only resolution to this dilemma is to test the argument (in order to prove it either right or wrong), and the best way to do this is through open debate. Debates have been fundamental in the history of science, where the constructive intellectual intercourse between two different concepts has allowed them to be compared so that a greater understanding can be gained.

I understand that the wheels of the GDC do not move with speed and implore you to deal with this matter with hast as I feel that the implications cannot be understated.

The very best wishes,

Michael Mew