

How safe is skill mix in dentistry?

Ahead of next year's Association of Dental Implantology congress, **Sue Boynton** explains what delegates will gain from her session on skill mix

The subject of skill mix is not new within the dental environment.

For some time, questions have been asked about whether team members' capabilities can be better utilised in order to streamline daily workflows and deliver better care to more patients.

The events of 2020 once again brought these issues to the fore, as dental professionals across the country were redeployed to support various other essential services.

Many were able to transfer the skills and experience they had gained in dentistry to other medical, scientific or communication roles, demonstrating how valuable skill mix could be.

When it comes to permanent and long-term changes in protocols and attitudes, it is important that the new way of doing things is truly better than the traditional. In dentistry, we are very focused on evidence-based procedures, and rightly so.

So, can we learn from the transfer of skills due to the COVID-19 pandemic and apply those lessons to dentistry moving forward?

Sue Boynton will be discussing this topic at the ADI Team Congress 2021.

Team approach

Sue will be sharing her insights in the team programme, where the afternoon will be dedicated to the subject and a selection of speakers

will share their expertise and perspectives with dental nurses, dental hygienists and dental therapists.

Here, Sue discusses the key areas she thinks will need addressing.

In Sue's words

During the challenge of COVID-19, what has become really clear is that members of the dental team are resourceful, adaptable and able to develop and use their skills to the fullest.

We have seen redeployed dental team

Many in the profession are looking at skills developed for redeployment and asking whether the 'new normal' will bring further opportunities for the dental team

members using their skills in a huge variety of ways, including virus testing, tracing, wound dressing, medical observations and monitoring, history taking, talking to relatives, and assisting patients with technology to enable them to talk to relatives.

The cornerstone of this rapid change has been training, demonstrating competencies and working in a team, with some existing skills being deployed within a different framework, and some new skills being developed.

This is important, as one of the frequent questions asked in implant dentistry is about whether we make the most of skill

AUTHOR

Sue Boynton

Sue has a master's degree in medical law, a Fellowship from the Faculty of General Dental Practice, a Fellowship from the Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine, and is an NLP Master. As an independent dentolegal consultant with more than 20 years of experience in the dental profession, she is ideally placed to offer a balanced view of the potential benefits and challenges of skill mix in the dental practice.



Save the date

- ADI Team Congress 2021: 'The Great Debate'
- 6-8 May 2021
- Manchester Central.

ADI members will be able to attend the ADI Team Congress for discounted rates. Visit www.adi.org.uk for more details.

mix opportunities.

As dental team members have demonstrated that they can safely carry out a variety of very different tasks, this is a very timely question, particularly in the context of the frequently mentioned 'new normal'.

What dental team members can do now is set out by the General Dental Council (GDC), who have recognised that redeployment has temporarily changed this, as have the indemnity organisations.

The key for the GDC is that dental team members have to be trained, competent and indemnified for the task they undertake.

Nothing has changed there, apart from the tasks themselves.

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Safety first

The 'Is skill mix safe?' session at the ADI Team Congress is our chance to explore the issues and identify opportunities to make the very best use of skill mix for the benefit of the dental team and our patients.

We don't want to miss opportunities, but we want to make sure that what we do is safe – not only for our patients, but also for us as dental professionals.

Sessions like this are so useful for exploring the real issues and they can have a very positive effect on enthusiasm and motivation.

As a dentist and an independent dentolegal adviser, I can examine the skill mix question from both sides, which means that discussions and ideas shared will be relevant to implant dentistry in the current

regulatory and legal climate.

The ADI Team Congress 2021 will present various sessions dedicated to team members, as well as the plenary programme and technicians programme.

It will also provide an opportunity to research new products and technologies with a major exhibition hosting manufacturers and suppliers of dental implant-related solutions.

The ADI Team Congress will bring together forward-thinking team members who will be able to network and benefit from relevant sessions that spark further discussion.

It is a fantastic opportunity for the whole dental team to be part of The Great Debate – the skill mix session will be a key part of that. **IDT**

