Editorial comment

The price of success

If at first you don’t succeed, try, try and try again. These fitting words were as good as written for Dr Eddie Crouch, who never once thought about throwing in the towel. Some of us are born to fight, while others - well they just don’t have it in them. But what a way to end 2008 - not just for Dr Eddie Crouch, but also for the profession. Furious right from the start on the way the ‘un-tried and untested’ contract was thrown at the profession, Dr Crouch was having none of it. Challenge - designed to ‘champion the cause of individual General Dental Practitioners (GDPs) who feel unable to fight the might of the Primary Care Trust (PCT) or the Department of Health’ was quickly set up. It attracted many followers but clearly this was not enough. The new clause allowing Primary Care Trusts to terminate the contract with GDPs without cause or notice was, according to Dr Crouch and most of you out there, not just an insult but an absolute joke. Only a man with steely determination could fight this one out in court and it had to be Dr Crouch. But not only did he have to fight this largely unsup- ported (think David and Goliath First Samuel 17), it drained him emotionally and financially, the latter costing him thousands and thousands of pounds. And he won. But then the news that the DH was going to appeal the hearing was the next blow. The British Dental Association (BDA) showed some support at this stage but did not pay any costs at all. Said Peter Ward, ‘Separately, the BDA had at- tempted to reach an agreement with Dr Crouch that would have protected him financially, but for his own reasons, Dr Crouch preferred to instruct and pay for his own legal team.’ Thank you BDA, at least we now know how far the profession’s association is truly prepared to go when it comes to achieving historical victory for dentists.

Nevertheless, at least the BDA turned up in the end. Dr Crouch says it shows ‘the huge learning curve the profession is on with dealing with these is- sues’, and that the BDA for ‘vari- ous reasons’ chose never to pay any of the legal bills. Dental Tri- bune thinks he is being kind. In short the BDA paid him a big fat zero – what a generous, support- ive Association we have. So as usual in situations like this, it is our true friends who have come up trumps. Dentists and ortho- dentists have dug pretty deep – and paid for almost half the costs.

All in all Dr Crouch’s act of bravery shows not just courage but also a side of utter selfless- ness. For he did this not just for himself but for the whole profession, and it will never be for- gotten.

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