Call me Dr, Dentist Dr

British Dental Association survey results show overwhelming clinician support for use of the courtesy title Dr

Four-fifths of dentists think it is appropriate to continue to use the courtesy title of ‘Dr’ according to a poll carried out by the British Dental Association (BDA). The survey, which was carried out as part of a discussion hosted on the BDA website between late July and early September, attracted high levels of interest, being viewed more than 2,800 times.

Three-quarters of respondents (76 per cent) said they would continue to use the title of ‘Dr’ when they introduce themselves to patients. Only one in five would stop using the title. Those who had decided to stop using the title were mainly unhappy about the negative publicity surrounding amalgam. However, most agreed that the title is least likely to cause confusion (97 per cent). The results are in line with the rest of Europe, which has had a long tradition of people using the title of “Doctor.”

The results of the poll will be used to emphasize the profession’s concerns in the BDA’s formal response to the General Dental Council’s consultation on the issue.

“This issue has generated unprecedented levels of interest from contributors to the BDA’s online communities section of the BDA website between late July and early September, attracted high levels of interest, being viewed more than 2,800 times. The results of the poll will be used to emphasize the profession’s concerns in the BDA’s formal response to the General Dental Council’s consultation on the issue.”

“It is clear from the contributions to this forum that, as long as it is made clear that the individual in question is a dentist, patients do not seem to be confused by the use of the title.”

Fused by the use of the term. The practice of referring to dentists in this way is long-established overseas and is also now firmly embedded in the UK.

However, the call has sparked a row with medical doctors who believe they are entitled to use the title. A spokesman for the Department of Health said: “The title of ‘Doctor’ is not a protected title, so you don’t have to be a medical practitioner to use it.”

He added, however, that there was a provision in the Dentists Act 1984, which prevented dentists from using any title or description to suggest a qualification that they did not possess; however, he said that it was up to the General Dental Council to enforce that rule.

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