Dr, Dr – but for how much longer?

Referring to a dentist as Dr is prevalent in most countries, however, due to recommendations made by the GDC's Standards Committee the GDC are due to consider whether dentists should continue to use this 'courteous' title.

In response to the proposed removal of their title, dentists across the country are arguing their case. Many feel that they have earned their title and continue to do so with their CPD requirements.

It has also been stressed that the lack of title would instantly promote competition between UK dentists and those who have studied dentistry abroad.

For the present moment, the decision has been postponed to carry out an ‘impact assessment’ and many are hoping that common sense will soon prevail, allowing dentists to continue bearing the title Dr.

The proposed decision has, unsurprisingly, caused debate throughout the country and here are a few examples of the feedback we have received.

The words speak for themselves:

"Why don’t the GDC do work that is actually useful and helpful to both patient and dentist? Do people really get confused or is it just yet another theoretical possibility that someone has come up with to verify their own position?"

Anonymous

"I am sorry, but this all smacks of some sort of convoluted political correctness that has nothing to do with the patient’s best interests. I doubt if any resolution by the GDC would force my patients to stop referring to me as ‘Dr’ anyway. Besides I would always fall back on my military title of ‘Colonel’ (despite the fact that I do not bear a weapon) or my civil title of ‘Lord’ (having bought a small piece of land in Scotland). Give us a bit of dignity and respect please! – particularly when we travel abroad and have to deal with doctors of dentistry elsewhere."

Mark Boulcott

"What I’d really like to understand, is who (individuals or pressure groups) are driving this anti-dentist agenda. With all the other coming requirements, this is an extra stage too far. I had hoped that when this coalition government came in, the “nanny state” was going to be withdrawn... If we do not look after things, then it’s our own fault. David Cameron “talks the talk” but when it comes to effective action to create individual responsibility (The Big Society), cutting out “Big Brother” state control seems to be taking a back seat. Let’s get back to being real professionals, whose advice and actions can be trusted; not being regulated by ineffectual pen-pushers in NGOs."

Brian J Clarke BDS

"Firstly, I am not sure that I am personally too bothered either way but feel that the profession desperately needs some leadership and those at the top to make a decision and stick to it. If they are really concerned about confusing the public then they should stop doing so! Our medical colleagues are not educated to doctorate level either – in effect their use of the title is also a courtesy title - presumably a gesture to the length of study. Since BDS takes as long as MBBS (okay longer if you count the number of weeks) then this argument applies equally. I have pre-reg training etc is longer but that is not where the title is allocated. The public are not stupid as to not realise that Dr Bloggs, BDS, Dental Surgeon is in fact dentally qualified. Furthermore, they also realise that Dr Bloggs, Chiropractor is in fact a chiropractor. They also know that dentists are called doctor in just about every other western country. I don’t think the GDC or Advertising Standards Council are helping anyone by patronising the general public. I have asked my implant company (BICON in Ireland) not to call me doctor. They just laughed – they have realised they have more important problems over there."

Anonymous

Personally I find this whole situation absolutely ridiculous and a total waste of my retention fee, which in its own right is a waste of money and a totally separate and lengthy discussion. How often and what evidence is there that dentists in the UK are using the “Dr” title in such a manner as to confuse or falsely treat patients?

To my understanding, a dentist is also known as a dental surgeon or a doctor who specialises in the diagnosis prevention and treatment of diseases and conditions of the oral cavity. Much like a physician is also known as a medical doctor, or simply doctor, who is concerned with maintaining or restoring human health through the study, diagnosis, and treatment of disease or injury. We both study at undergraduate level to gain our degrees for the same amount of time and if aspiring to specialise in a specific field train for similar periods. So why should we not be offered the same courtesy title?

Peter Coster BDS

"The only people to be confused are the GDC-shame on them for their pettiness."

Anonymous

"The proposed abolition of the Dr title is nothing to do with confusing a few patients, anyone that stupid is likely to be confused by their wristwatch."

Anonymous

"Dentists worldwide use the courtesy title Dr so do members of the medical profession. If the courtesy title is to be withdrawn from dentists then only those holding a PhD should be called doctor."

Anonymous