

InDent

Supporting
future leaders
Focusing on
the whole patient
Bringing history
to life



World questions | KING'S *answers*

KING'S
College
LONDON

A commitment to excellence

Pirooz Zia (Guy's, 1991) runs an endodontics practice in Washington DC and is part of King's Dental Circle. On a recent visit to London, he spoke about giving back

I was born in Iran and my family moved to the UK in 1979. I received my BDS from Guy's in 1991 and then went to Boston University to specialise in endodontics. I now live and work in Washington DC. Exposure to three very different cultures was initially challenging, but it has taught me a little about adaptability and being open, which I think are useful concepts.

I chose endodontics because I was attracted to the micro nature of the specialty. It's also a rewarding opportunity to relieve pain and help people save their natural teeth. It's an exciting time to be in our field as the technological advances have made the procedures faster, vastly more comfortable for our patients and extremely predictable in terms of outcome.

Although I'm surrounded by the latest and greatest technology at work, what makes the difference is our unwavering commitment to excellence. I don't necessarily define excellence as the perfect root canal. For me, it's about being fully engaged with my patients and committed to their wellbeing. It's also about continual improvement. No matter where you rank among your competition or how good you think you are, there is always room for improvement.

This is one of the values that I learned at King's. I was taught by extraordinary educators like Professors Challacombe, Poswillo, Watson and Pitt Ford. They were giants in their field and they focused on teaching us how to 'be' as well as what to 'do'.

When you talk about success,

people immediately equate it to material wealth or a busy practice. Although that's part of it, to me success also includes good health, peace of mind, fulfilling relationships and opportunities for creative freedom and growth.

Three years ago I reconnected with the school by joining the Dental Circle. I am working with Dianne Rekow, the new Dean of the Dental Institute and one of the smartest people I've met, to develop a postgraduate programme focusing on teaching dentists the leadership and management skills they need to succeed. It's a unique and exciting project, and once again I'm the one learning the most! This autumn, I was back at King's, speaking about the role of computed tomography in endodontic diagnosis. It's great to be able to interact with the students and perhaps give them a glimpse of life after school. I hope it will become an annual fixture.

My peers were incredibly talented and many of them have become leaders in their field and professional community. It would be wonderful

“ It's great to give students a glimpse of life after school ”

to see them become involved and share their knowledge and know-how. I think it was Churchill who said: 'You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give.' And who can argue with Churchill!



Trailblazer

Professor David Poswillo CBE

He is remembered as an inspirational teacher and adviser to governments (1927-2003)

An innovative scientist and surgeon, Professor David Poswillo CBE was a man of vision and considerable energy. He is perhaps best known for his work heading up two Whitehall committees that had a profound impact on public health and established new standards for safe dental practice.

David Poswillo was born in Gisborne, New Zealand, and qualified in dentistry at Otago University at the age of just 21. His research into cleft lip and palate, carried out in his garden shed, brought him to the attention of Sir Harold Himsworth, then Secretary of the UK Medical Research Council, marking the beginning of his career as a noted researcher and practitioner.

In the early 1960s, Professor Poswillo came to England to take up a post at the Royal College of Surgeons, initially as a Nuffield Scholar and later as Chair of Teratology, the study of physiological abnormalities. In 1977, he moved to Australia to head up the Department of Craniofacial Surgery at the University of Adelaide, where he co-authored *The Craniosynostoses*, a seminal work on deformities of the face and head.

Two years later, he returned to London and the Royal Dental Hospital, this time specialising in oral and maxillofacial surgery. The Royal Dental Hospital merged with Guy's Hospital Dental School in the mid-1980s, with Professor Poswillo serving as head of department until his retirement in 1992.

Professor Poswillo is best remembered for his work in the 1990s, when he chaired a Department of Health working party on anaesthesia, sedation and resuscitation in dentistry. The Poswillo Report made more than 50 recommendations aimed at reducing the risks

associated with dental treatment.

The recommendations covered equipment, training and the registration and inspection of premises and, crucially, established a new standard of practice. The report stated that, whereas previously dentists had frequently carried out anaesthesia alone, now two professional clinicians – including a qualified anaesthetist – must always be present. These standards have undoubtedly saved many lives.

Professor Poswillo next chaired the Scientific Committee on Tobacco and Health, which paved the way for major advances in health policy on tobacco issues, including restrictions on smoking in public places.

He was an active member of the Medical Defence Union, Treasurer and Senior Vice-President of the Royal Society of Medicine and President of the British Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons.

Professor Poswillo was an inspirational teacher, and many of today's leading dentists owe him a debt of gratitude.

