

NEW YEAR REVOLUTIONS

Roger Matthews

The arrival of a new year, and some would say a new decade, (but that depends on whether you recognise the existence of the year “0”) always sparks both forward and backward ponderings.

What have we achieved in the past twelve months? How does it stack up against our plans and ambitions of a year ago? And what are now our goals for the twelve months ahead?

There are, it is said, two kinds of people: those who divide people into stereotypes and those who don't... That was a philosophical joke, for those of you reading this very early in the morning, or after a few units of alcohol.

However, it is undoubtedly true – I think there's even an evidence base, but please correct me if I'm wrong – that writing down our goals and objectives is the first step to achieving them. You could, I suppose equally argue (if you were feeling a little petulant) that it is impossible to know whether a G or O had actually been accomplished if you never actually bothered to frame it accurately in the first place.

Whether you undertake this task or not, there are certainly many who do – and that would include myself. Of rather greater significance, is the fact that the Administration most certainly has Gs and Os in relation to dentistry, and a time frame to go with them.

You may have read that the months leading up to a General Election are quiet ones in terms of policy reform and public announcements and that is certainly the established pattern. However, behind the scenes, in true “Yes, Minister” style, the work of the Civil Service goes on, and in between briefing the opposition front bench teams on Work in Progress, the machinery of Government continues to evolve new legislation, regulation and strategy.

I remember being quite surprised to learn from a senior ex-Civil Servant, how much of Tony Blair's "new look" Labour policies of 1997 could clearly trace back their origin to the latter days of John Major's Conservative administration.

So Revolutions for 2010, at least in the run up to the election, and for dentistry in the immediate months afterwards, are not on the cards. However, following a headline-grabbing post-election budget (whoever wins) there is certain to be a grinding and relentless efficiency drive, and this is where dentistry will be first affected.

The days when under-performance on NHS contracts were simply ignored or postponed to a future year – that is, the norm of 2006 – 9 – may become only a wistful memory, as PCTs need to make the most of their financial allocation.

"If you don't make your own plans, you will become part of someone else's" it has been said (well I just said it anyway). So this New Year, even if you've never done it before, might be a good time to resolve to make your own resolutions. They may be invaluable in the months and years to come.

Notes to Editors:

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Roger joined Denplan in 1995 having spent 20 years working in general dental practice and as a dento-legal advisor for the Medical Defence Union. He oversees dental advice to the company and its links with professional bodies, and is responsible for Denplan's professional services.