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August 30<sup>th</sup> 2019

Dear Minister,

On behalf of the Faculty of Dentistry (FoD) at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, I would like to thank you for inviting my colleague, Professor Chris Lynch (Vice-Dean) and myself, as Dean, to your meeting in relation to 'Smile agus Sláinte', at the Department of Health on Monday, August 26<sup>th</sup>.

Once again, I want to congratulate you, Dr. Kavanagh, and your team on developing this policy and providing such important leadership in relation to improving the oral health of the Irish population.

We were also delighted to see important contributions from other key stakeholders in dentistry in Ireland and to note the high degree of agreement between each stakeholder particularly in the area of mandatory CPD.

Whilst the issue of Foundation training generated more debate, it would be important to recognize that any system should help support the new graduate as a "safe beginner" in their first months in practice. Whilst the aspiration to change undergraduate dental education to assist in this is laudable, it would be dangerous to diverge significantly from what is considered current best practice in medicine where such a foundation year is already in place helping to protect the clinician as well as the patient. It should be noted that a Dental Foundation Programme currently exists to good effect in the UK.

We were pleasantly surprised to hear from the Registrar of the IDC that under the current, existing legislation the Dental Council has the power to recognize

further dental specialties. As you know, the Dental Council currently recognize Oral Surgery and Orthodontics as the only dental specialties in Ireland. Following today's meeting, we have reviewed the Dentists Act (1985) and, in particular, Sections 29 and 37<sup>1</sup>, which deal with the recognition of new dental specialties. With the introduction of 'Smile agus Sláinte', we feel there is an important and exciting opportunity, in light of this information, to immediately recognize new dental specialties to support the policy, while at the same time providing the opportunity to reassure the public in relation to the distinction between 'specialist' and 'generalist'.

Important examples of such specialties to immediately support 'Smile agus Sláinte' include Special Care Dentistry (as discussed today by our colleagues from the Irish Society of Disability & Oral Health) and Paediatric Dentistry. The FoD also believe that other specialties which should be recognized include Prosthodontics, Periodontics, Restorative Dentistry, Endodontics and Dental Public Health.

Such a decision would keep us in line with our UK and European comparators, support the delivery of 'Smile agus Sláinte' (e.g. via the services in the Advanced Oral Care Centres), while offering the public reassurance as to the services provided by 'specialists'. We would ask you to review this area carefully and make directions, as appropriate. We feel that patients in Ireland have much to gain via the expedition of recognition of further dental specialties.

At our meeting it was referenced that 'consultants' are individuals appointed to senior leadership positions by a hospital/ institution based on well publicized consultant: population figures. It was noted that this was a matter for the employer. While the decision to make a consultant appointment does indeed rest with the institution / relevant NHS trust in the UK, it would be important that there is a plan in place for the development and implementation of such posts and the FoD see 'Smile agus Sláinte' as a fantastic opportunity to begin this process. Such posts ensure that patient needs are met and above all; patient safety is maintained. There is also the added value that any appointees will be

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<sup>1</sup> *The Council may, from time to time with the consent of the Minister, determine the specialties which it shall recognise for the purpose of specialist registration under this Act*

future trainers of upcoming specialists and consultants. With Section 37 (3) of the Dentist Act (1985) in mind,<sup>2</sup> we would be delighted to offer any assistance we can, where appropriate.

Thank you once again for inviting us to the meeting on August 26<sup>th</sup>. We would be delighted to follow-up on your kind offer of involving us in forthcoming working groups and development forums. Thank you also for acknowledging the need for meeting minutes/file note and the need for a 6 week notice to afford appropriate planning /reorganization of clinical commitments.

Please feel free to contact us through my email, [johnmarley@rcsi.ie](mailto:johnmarley@rcsi.ie)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Marley". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dr. John Marley

Dean

Faculty of Dentistry, RCSI

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<sup>2</sup> *The Council shall from time to time determine, in relation to each specialty recognised by it, the body or bodies which the Council shall recognise in the State for the purpose of granting evidence of satisfactory completion of specialist training.*