The outstanding and innovative Brush DJ app

BSPD award in 2018 sees Brush DJ as the outright winner with two Highly Commended entries from Leeds as runner-ups

Ben Underwood, creator of the tooth brushing app Brush DJ, has been named the winner of the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry’s Outstanding Innovation Award. The judges were unanimous in their decision as well as united in their praise for the high standard of entries in 2018.

The app’s most important quality, according to the judges, is that it’s free and accessible to anyone who has a Smartphone or tablet. Incorporating technology which makes it possible for blind and low-vision users, as well as users with dyslexia, to enjoy the app, its potential for improving oral health is far-reaching.

Brush DJ has been downloaded to over a quarter of a million devices in 197 countries and is the only dental app in the new NHS Digital Apps library. The app has been translated into 14 languages, with no passwords, in-app purchases or personal details required and can be used with any type of toothbrush.

The main feature of the app is a timer which plays two minutes of music taken at random from the user’s device or music streaming service. A paper exploring user perceptions has been published in the peer-reviewed British Dental Journal. It found 88% of users were motivated to brush their teeth for longer and 92.3% would recommend Brush DJ to their friends and family.
Two other entries were Highly Commended and both originated from Leeds where the oral health of children is among the worst in the country. The first ‘highly commended’ entry is Open Wide, which is led by students at the University of Leeds School of Dentistry. The project has a variety of approaches, depending on the age and needs of young people in the age range 4-18. Open Wide’s focus is on reducing oral health and social inequalities.

Volunteer students go into primary schools and provide workshops and assemblies as well as going into secondary schools and colleges to provide support and guidance to students interested in dentistry. The volunteers are also training sixth form students to become dental educators in primary schools. The judges described Open Wide as “a gem of an initiative.”

The second ‘highly commended’ entry is an animation that has been made for Leeds Community Healthcare Dental Service. The animation is to help young people with autism prepare for a dental appointment.

The four minute animation is called Jack is going to the Dentist and has been created by a team which includes specialist dental nurses, a speech therapist and paediatric dentists led by Consultant in Paediatric Dentistry, Lucy Williams. It is supported by additional resources to help patients with autism acclimatise to the sights and sounds of a dental clinic. Next step for the team will be to use qualitative research methods to investigate how well the animation helps patients and their parents prepare for going to the clinic.

The judges were full of praise for the animation which benefits an important cohort of patients treated in community clinics and hospitals. They said: “With around 1:100 young people on the autistic spectrum in the UK and likely to find going to the dentist a challenging experience, this is a valuable resource. We look forward to reading the results of their research.”

BSPD President Claire Stevens commented: “The calibre of entries was high for
this year's Outstanding Innovation Award and judging was an honour and a challenge for the BSPD Executive. Ben is a worthy winner while each and every entry reflected well on the commitment of BSPD members to improve children's oral health”.

Stephen Fayle, Consultant in Paediatric Dentistry at Leeds Dental Institute, said: “West Yorkshire is an area of the country where many children have poor oral health, and it is fantastic to see such effort and innovation being focused on this important health challenge. Everyone involved in these projects should be justly proud of their achievements.”

**Notes to Editors**

**Background on Ben and Brush DJ:**

Ben is an NHS Innovation Accelerator (NIA) fellow. He invested his own money to develop the app for benefit of his patients, but realised that it could be scaled to reach thousands, if not millions of people. As an NIA fellow he received financial support to develop the latest version of the app. The funding for the NIA programme came from The Health Foundation, NHS England and the Academic Health Science Network. Follow this link to view a quick tour of Brush DJ:


To find out more about Open Wide, go to: [www.openwidedentists.co.uk](http://www.openwidedentists.co.uk) and to view Jack goes to the dentist, follow this link:

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37ZQaKI9Qss](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=37ZQaKI9Qss).

The British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD) is the leading UK organisation of dental professionals dedicated to improving the oral health of children in the UK.

[www.bspd.co.uk](http://www.bspd.co.uk)