

# Prestigious Honorary Fellowships



(L-R): Dame Sarah Gilbert, Mr Matthew Garrett and Baroness Floella Benjamin.

Dame Sarah Gilbert and Baroness Floella Benjamin received Honorary Fellowships in March from the Faculty of Dental Surgery (FDS) at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, for their contributions to dentistry. They were given the prestigious awards at the FDS's Diplomates Ceremony, at the College's flagship building in Lincoln's Inn Fields, London.

Dame Sarah, a Professor of Vaccinology at the University of Oxford, co-created the Oxford-AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. It has widely been credited with saving countless lives in the UK and around the world. By January 2022, a year after the vaccine was first administered, 50 million AstraZeneca vaccines had been given in the UK, and around 2.5 billion doses had been distributed to more than 170 countries.

Baroness Floella Benjamin became well known for her role as a much loved children's television presenter. Since 1973, Baroness Benjamin has been campaigning for diversity both in front of, and behind, the camera. She advises the BBC on its diversity policies and sits in the House of Lords, where she passionately promotes children's welfare.

Baroness Benjamin was awarded her Honorary Fellowship of the Faculty of Dental Surgery for her campaigning work on children's oral health. She has raised awareness in parliament of the need to improve children's oral health on a number of occasions, and supported the Faculty's call to introduce tooth-brushing schemes in nurseries. For instance, in 2017, Baroness Benjamin held a debate in the House of Lords to find out what action the Government was taking to address the problem of child tooth decay. In 2019, Baroness Benjamin questioned what the Government planned to do to tackle the oral health problems of 'hard to reach children', especially those in deprived areas of the country.

Mr Matthew Garrett, Dean of the FDS at the Royal College of Surgeons of England, said: 'Both Dame Sarah and Baroness Floella Benjamin are richly deserving of their Honorary Fellowships. Dame Sarah has saved countless lives by spearheading the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. The pandemic exacerbated existing health inequalities, including in children's oral health. It caused enormous

disruption to dentistry. In March 2020, all routine treatments such as fillings and check-ups were suspended. The vaccination rollout has helped us to get services up and running again and to start to tackle the huge backlog that has built up.

'It is difficult to overstate the importance of Dame Sarah's work to our profession, our practice and our patients' health and wellbeing. On behalf of all of our Fellows and Members, I would like to say a sincere and heartfelt thank you to Dame Sarah and her team at Oxford.'

Mr Garrett added: 'Baroness Floella Benjamin has been a tireless advocate for the welfare and education of children around the world. Through her role as a much loved children's television presenter, writer, actress, working peer and Vice President of Barnardo's, she has campaigned for and supported children. This includes her work in promoting children's oral health. She has also fought to reduce inequality in society. We are delighted to welcome her as an Honorary Fellow at the Faculty of Dental Surgery.'

The ceremony, which welcomed new Members and Fellows to the FDS, also saw Professor Kevin O'Brien made an Honorary Fellow. He is Emeritus Professor of Orthodontics at the University of Manchester and a recently retired Honorary Consultant Orthodontist at the Manchester Dental Hospital. In addition, Professor Derek Portwood, who founded the Centre for Unemployment Studies, was made a Fellow by election. ✧