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Siobhan Hiscott
Group managing editor

I think it's fair to say that December is devoted to wrapping up. It may be that you're wrapping gifts in preparation for the festive season, wrapping yourself to protect against the cold snap, or more generally wrapping the year up.

December editorials have long been a favourite of mine to write. The chance to reflect on the last 12 months and the promise of what lies ahead makes writing feel easy.

Yet, it's not been the easiest of years for dentistry, has it? From recruitment and staffing issues to the financial implications of the autumn budget, the many challenges we've battled this year don't look like they'll disappear for 2025.

But for every challenge that's reared its head, I've seen scores of practices and individuals step up against these trials with success too. You need look no further than our Private Dentistry Award winners, showcased in all their glory on page 17, for evidence of that.

So, as we prepare to close the chapter on 2024, it feels fitting to look back over the journey of the past 12 months. From commitments made and promises fulfilled to lessons learned and challenges overcome, this year has had plenty of ups and downs.

At the start of the year, we signed ourselves up for resolutions, goals, and dreams. Some of these commitments were

personal – a promise to prioritise wellbeing, reconnect with loved ones, or chase long-held aspirations. Others were collective: as a dental community many of us have sought progress on pressing issues.

And we have needed progress: throughout the course of the year, we've faced trials that tested our resolve. From the uncertainties of the economy to global events that demanded resilience, sealing our commitments hasn't always been easy. But doing that – those moments of perseverance and effort – has been where the magic happened. Whether in acts of kindness, collaboration or quiet determination, I've watched the dental community fortify its bonds and prove that it can weather storms together.

So now, as the year concludes, we each can take stock of what we have delivered. These achievements, big and small, deserve to be celebrated: the goals we reached, the lessons we gained, and the relationships we strengthened. Even the setbacks carry value, teaching us where we can grow in the year ahead.

This year has been a testament to the power of commitment and follow-through. As we turn the page, let us continue to sign bold dreams, seal them with dedication, and deliver on them with heart.

Here's to the new year – may it bring fresh opportunities, resilience and joy.



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PRIVATE

DENTISTRY

MISSION STATEMENT

Private Dentistry is an essential reference for dental practice development in the 21st century, focused on helping practices evolve sustainably, operate innovatively, and thrive.

GROUP MANAGING EDITOR

Siobhan Hiscott
siobhan.hiscott@fmc.co.uk | 01923 851758

CHIEF COMMERCIAL OFFICER

Tim Molony
tim.molony@fmc.co.uk | 07595 282680

MEDIA PARTNERSHIPS MANAGER

Ivana Perkins
ivana.perkins@fmc.co.uk | 07760 887016

DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

Glenn Baxter, K-Marcelyne McCalla

CONTENT DIRECTOR

Guy Hiscott

CONTENT

Rowan Thomas, Heather Grimes, Gaby Bissett, Lucy Veal

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BDS, owns an award-winning practice in Leamington Spa. She has developed her career in general dentistry, while also specialising in cosmetic dentistry with a particular interest in facial aesthetics. She is a member of the BACD.



SUBIR BANERJI

BDS MCLinDent (Prosthodontics) PhD MFGDP (UK) FICOI FICD, has been in private practice in London for more than 30 years and is the programme director for the MSc in Aesthetic Dentistry at King's College London Dental Institute.



COLIN CAMPBELL

BDS FDS RCS Ed, is a specialist in oral surgery. He is clinical director of The Campbell Clinic and director of The Campbell Academy.



ANDREW CHANDRAPAL

BDS MFGDP (UK) DPDS (Bris), is practice principal at Bourne End Dental and UK programme director for the Californian Centre for Advanced Dental Studies.



SIMON CHARD

BDS, co-owns Rothley Lodge Dental with his wife Dr Meghan Chard. He is immediate past president of the BACD, lectures nationally and is a co-founder of Pärila toothpaste tabs.



RACHEL DERBY

BDS MS, is an award-winning dentist and a partner and founder of Chapel Dental in Buckinghamshire. Rachel is the president of the BAPD.



MERVYN DRUIHAN

BDS (Rand) DGDPRCS (Lon), is one of the pioneers of cosmetic dentistry. He is one of very few UK dentists to be on the distinguished AACD President's Honour Role.



ELAINE HALLEY

BDS (Edin) MFGDP (UK), is principal of Cherrybank Dental Spa Ltd.



SUNIL HIRANI

BSc BDS FDSRCS FDS (Orth) RCs Eng MOrth MSc, is a specialist in orthodontics and practice principal of Smilelux, a dedicated orthodontic practice in Milton Keynes.



MARTINA HODGSON

BChD MJDF, is owner and principal dentist at The Dental Studio in Wakefield and is also known as the Dental Architect. She has an interest in orthodontics, Invisalign and facial aesthetics.



NEEL JAISWAL

BDS, runs a multidisciplinary practice at Neel Dentistry. He founded PDI-Professional Dental Indemnity Ltd. He is a judge on the Private Dentistry Awards. He founded the British Academy of Microscope Dentistry and is a founder of the BAPD.



SAM JETHWA

BDS, is the founder of Bespoke Smile Clinic & Academy, which trains dentists on occlusion, porcelain veneers, and rehabilitations. Sam is on the board of directors at the BACD, and has been a judge for the Private Dentistry Awards.



ANGELA LY

BDS, is an award-winning dentist who has featured on *BBC Breakfast*, ITV's *Save Money Good Health* and Channel 5's *Gadget Show*.



HANNA MIRAFTAB

BDS, is owner of Kiln Lane Dental practice and an actress in *Real Housewives of Cheshire*. She has completed a master's degree in prosthodontics and has qualifications in non-surgical treatments such as anti-ageing injectables.



ASHISH B PARMAR

BDS, is a cosmetic dentist offering smile design, comprehensive dental care, laser dentistry and implants. He is a national and international lecturer.



KISH PATEL

BDS MSc, is a director at Smile Clinic Group and director of Smile Dental Academy. Having successfully completed training in Invisalign in 2011, he offers a range of clear and cosmetic orthodontic treatments.



KREENA PATEL

BDS, is a specialist in endodontics. She taught on the specialist endodontics programme at Guy's. She works at Brigstock Dental Practice and Oaktree Dental Practice. Kreena runs an online endo course, The Endo Course.



MANRINA RHODE

BDS, has a skincare line DRMR, runs courses on porcelain veneers, Designing Smiles and recently opened DRMR, a superclinic in Knightsbridge, London. She has completed over 13,000 porcelain veneers over 20 years.



JASON SMITHSON

BDS (Lond) DipRestDent RCS (Eng), qualified at the Royal London Hospital in 1995, achieving a number of awards.



KOMAL SURI

BChD, owns Smile Design Dental Practice. The focus of her work is aesthetic and restorative dentistry.



PROFESSOR PAUL TIPTON

BDS MSc DGDGP UK, is a specialist in prosthodontics, president of the British Academy of Restorative Dentistry and an internationally renowned dental lecturer.



ANDREA UBHI

BChD, is principal of the referral practice, Andrea Ubhi Dentistry, in York. She is also chair of the charity Asha Nepal, supporting survivors of trafficking.



SIR NAIRN WILSON

CBE DSc (hc) FDS FFGDP (UK) FFD FRC, is emeritus professor of dentistry at King's College London. He was previously dean and head of King's College Dental School (2001-2010), dean of the Faculty of Dentistry RCS Edinburgh (1995-1998), and president of the GDC (1999-2003).

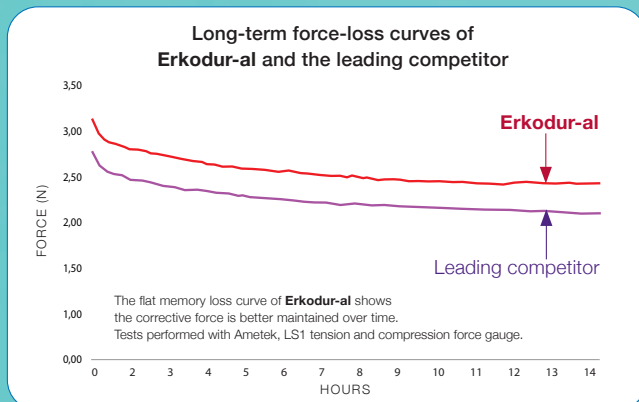
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Annual mouth cancer cases reach 10,000 in the UK

Annual cases of mouth cancer diagnosed in the UK have risen to 10,825, according to newly released data, up from 8,864 the previous year.

According to the Oral Health Foundation's *State of Mouth Cancer UK Report 2024*, this has increased by 38% in the past decade and 133% in the last 20 years. Last year, 3,637 people died as a result of mouth cancer.

Mouth cancer now accounts for just over 2% of all cancers, the 10th most common form in the UK. This rises to ninth in men alone, with two thirds of oral cancer cases occurring in men.

Age is a significant factor for mouth cancer, with 81% of patients aged over 55. Almost six in 10 (58%) oral cancer cases are diagnosed in the 55 to 74 age group.

Another influence is deprivation levels. Men in the most deprived areas have a 101% higher chance of oral cancer, while women experience a 64% higher likelihood.

Scotland has a greater incidence of mouth cancer compared to the rest of the UK, at 19.2 cases per 100,000 people. Levels are lowest in Northern Ireland (13 cases per 100,000).

The 3,637 annual mouth cancer deaths equate to 10 people every day. Depending on the location of the cancer, one-year survival rates are between 60% and 84%. This drops to between 18% and 57% after 10 years.

Hypopharyngeal cancer is the most deadly, with an 18% chance of survival after 10 years. Early detection boosts the chances of survival by between 50% and 90%. Across the UK, deaths from oral cancer have increased by 52% in the past 10 years.

British Orthodontic Society issues statement regarding orthodontic claims

The British Orthodontic Society (BOS) has clarified its position on the issue of claims that may be made about orthodontics following the completion of a recent General Dental Council (GDC) fitness to practise case.

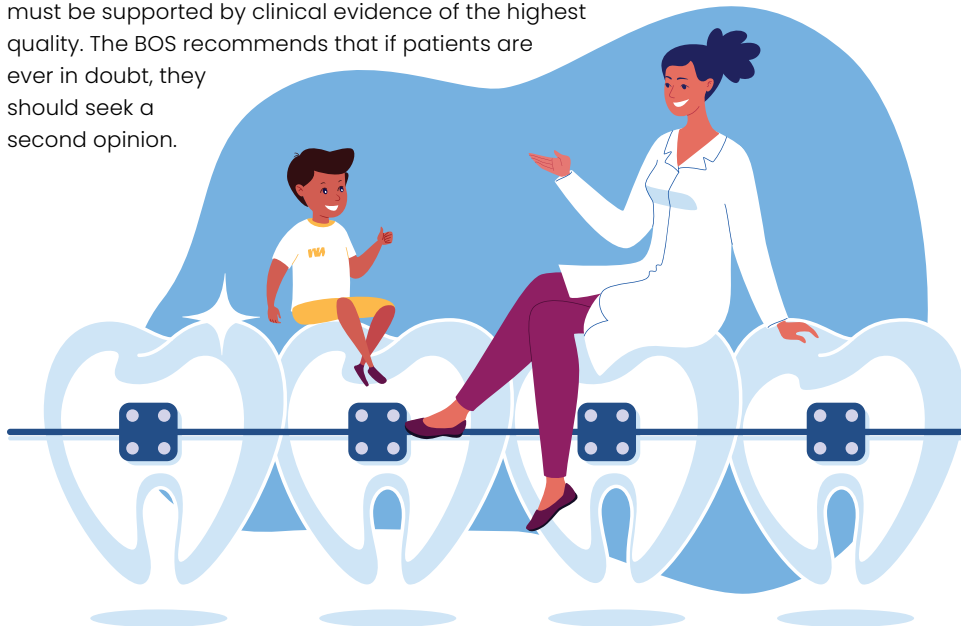
As a professional society and charity, the BOS promotes the highest quality of patient care through the advancement of scientific research and education. The BOS's first duty of care is to patients.

The BOS advocates that patients proceed with caution and seek alternative advice if told that a recommended orthodontic treatment or approach will do any of the following:

- Cause the child's cheekbones to rise or their jaws to change significantly in position – such changes may occur naturally as part of a child's development, but the BOS is not aware of this being achieved as part of orthodontic treatment
- Cure or cause jaw joint problems – there is no evidence for this
- Improve speech – there is no evidence for this
- Improve breathing disorders – there is no evidence for this
- Improve your child's intelligence – there is no evidence those patients with crooked teeth or sleep apnoea are less intelligent than others.

There is no scientific evidence to suggest patients can change the shape of their face or improve their intelligence by chewing or holding teeth and the tongue in a closed position or indeed making any kind of facial movements.

The BOS funds research into orthodontics and is always willing to consider alternative views provided these are backed by scientific evidence. While the society welcomes independent thinkers and innovation in orthodontics, all views must be supported by clinical evidence of the highest quality. The BOS recommends that if patients are ever in doubt, they should seek a second opinion.





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General Dental Council revises fitness to practise processes to **‘improve timeliness’**

The General Dental Council (GDC) has adopted an initial enquiries process to speed up fitness to practise (FtP) investigations.

The new process limits the amount of information requested by the GDC at the initial stages of an investigation. Only relevant clinical records will now be gathered, reducing the amount of time taken to review the documentation.

This change will only apply to single-patient cases involving a dental professional with no other FtP concerns raised in the previous 12 months. The regulator said this was to ‘ensure investigations were proportionate to the potential risks’ because these cases have a high likelihood of being closed at the initial assessment stage.

PILOT SCHEME RESULTS

The GDC has announced last year’s pilot scheme ‘demonstrated that the approach can significantly reduce the average time it takes to conclude an investigation’. According to the GDC’s findings, cases took an average of 13 weeks to conclude during the pilot, compared to 30 weeks for single-incident cases outside of the scheme. Of around 250 cases investigated during the pilot, 84% were concluded at the assessment stage with no further action.

Theresa Thorp, executive director of regulation at the GDC, said: ‘While investigations into fitness to practise concerns are an important part of the regulatory system that maintains public safety and confidence, reducing the negative impacts of investigations is a priority for us.

‘The pilot has shown the potential to streamline investigations for certain types of concerns while upholding the GDC’s commitment to public protection.’

She also stressed the GDC’s hope to reduce the impact of FtP processes on dental professionals’ wellbeing. She said: ‘By taking a different approach with certain types of cases, we are working to reduce the negative health and wellbeing impacts of our investigations for all participants in regulatory proceedings.

‘Ongoing research is helping us understand the difference these changes make, and we are committed to further improvements based on the insights gathered.’

DEATHS WHILE UNDER FITNESS TO PRACTICE INVESTIGATION

On 4 November, the GDC released figures on the cause of death of dental professionals who have died under FtP investigation. In the period between 2019 and 2022 covered by the report, 20 dental professionals died under these circumstances. Their causes of death were categorised as natural, external, or unspecified, with one subcategory of suicide.

The GDC says it replaced exact numbers within number ranges to reduce the risk of individuals being identified through calculations of the reported data.

The figures are:

- Natural – seven to 10
- Deaths from external causes – seven to 10, of which one to three were confirmed as suicide
- Other/unspecified – one to three.

Deaths were included in the subcategory of suicide when ‘suicide’ was listed on the death certificate or notification. Death certificates in Scotland and Northern Ireland do not use the word ‘suicide’ or any synonym of it.

Berry-flavoured vapes may be **more dangerous** than those without flavour

Berry-flavoured vapes can weaken the lungs’ natural defences, new research suggests, prompting warnings over the types of flavours used for e-cigarettes.

Published in *PNAS*, the scholars said the study adds to ongoing evidence on how adding flavourings to vaping solutions can increase the associated dangers.

Assistant professor Ajitha Thanabalasuriam, from the department of pharmacology and therapeutics at McGill University, is co-author on the study. ‘We need to be careful about the types of flavours that we’re including in these products,’ she said.

‘They can have detrimental effects. I think that’s really the take-home message, especially some of these vaping products that are marketed for kids – the way they’re sold, the type of containers they are sold in – it’s very colourful, it’s really attractive to children, and this can be a really bad thing for our future.’

The researchers exposed mice to e-cigarette vapour over several days and used a live imaging technique to observe their lung immune cells in real time.

Professor Thanabalasuriam added that more work is needed to pinpoint the specific compounds in berry-flavoured vapes responsible for impairing immune cells and to confirm whether the effects observed in mice also occur in humans.




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A quest for quality

Chris Barrow on setting 2025 goals and making some memories



CHRIS
BARROW

Another calendar year races towards its finish line and there will be many reading this column who are, on top of December deadlines, attempting to balance the delivery of dentistry to demanding patients, keeping teams and clinicians happy, pursuing professional, business and personal goals and the demands of family at this seasonal time. As if you haven't got enough to deal with, then along I come and declare: 'It's time to set your goals for 2025!'

BRIGHTER DAYS

Many years ago I attended a personal and professional development workshop with a colleague – two days in the company of an international business guru, gently admonishing us for our failings while showing us his path to brighter days.

We were asked to reflect on our wins and challenges of the previous year, learn from them, take a realistic look in the mirror at our current SWOT, and then ambitiously plan a bigger future.

On day two, during a lunchtime walk, my colleague said: 'Wouldn't it be nice to just be meaningless for a little while?'

His (tongue in cheek) point was that the relentless demands of performance, perfection and progress can sometimes be just too much to bear. We need a breather – and that's not just a few of days of 'no get ups at Christmas' (as my late father used to call the holidays), accompanied by fresh air, feasting and fun.

EXTREME SELF-CARE

I'd like you to either remind yourself or consider anew the subject of extreme self-care – about welcoming the new year with a commitment not just to a quantitative approach to life (numbers) but also a qualitative one (experiences).

We are familiar with quantitative targets – sales, profit, KPIs, treatment modalities sold, locations, clinicians, chairs, UDAs and UOAs – endless lists of things we keep count of.

Quantitative seems to dominate when judgement is passed on how 'successful' we are – money, possessions, patients, friends, followers, likes, reviews, listeners, readers!

Extreme self-care is frequently ignored in the pursuit of numbers. The qualitative experience of our lives is sacrificed for the quantitative race for measurable (and comparable) results.

As a parent of five adult children, I've learned in recent years that my kids don't remember the things we bought them – they remember the holidays. In years of feast, spending long summer days in Tuscany and, in years of famine, camping on the floor of a friend's holiday home in Ilfracombe or in damp tents in Snowdonia and the Lake District. They all remember theatre visits and a trip to Las Vegas!

Numbers don't make memories, experiences do.

BEST BUSINESS DECISION

The best business decision I ever made was in 1996 when I implemented a calendar that I've stuck to for 28 years:

- 12 weeks' vacation every year
- 40 x five-day working weeks
- One day a week working on my business
- Four days a week working in my business.

When I work, I'm largely in quantitative mode – either chasing my own numbers or helping my clients and audiences to chase theirs. It's important to take a qualitative approach to work as well.

When I'm not working, I'm focused on experiences, whether it's with self, family or friends, whether indoors or outdoors, whether physical, mental or spiritual.

On 1 January 2025, I'll be implementing the first change to my schedule since the mid-90s, reducing my 40 working weeks to a four-day week, dropping to three days a week working in my business.

In 1996, my motivation was to be a better parent. In 2025 it's to be a better grandparent.

DO NOT DISTURB

I began this column by remarking on the overwhelm that we all subject ourselves to if we get dragged into the quantitative hamster wheel and don't plan the time to experience quality in what we do.

I am, of course, working with clients on 2025 goals, but I'm also encouraging them to think about experiences.

If you take nothing else from these observations, please buy yourself a wall planner, book out some DND time and decide now how many days you'd like to take off in 2025, how many days to work on and how many days in, but most importantly, what you plan to do with those days off.

Go make some memories.

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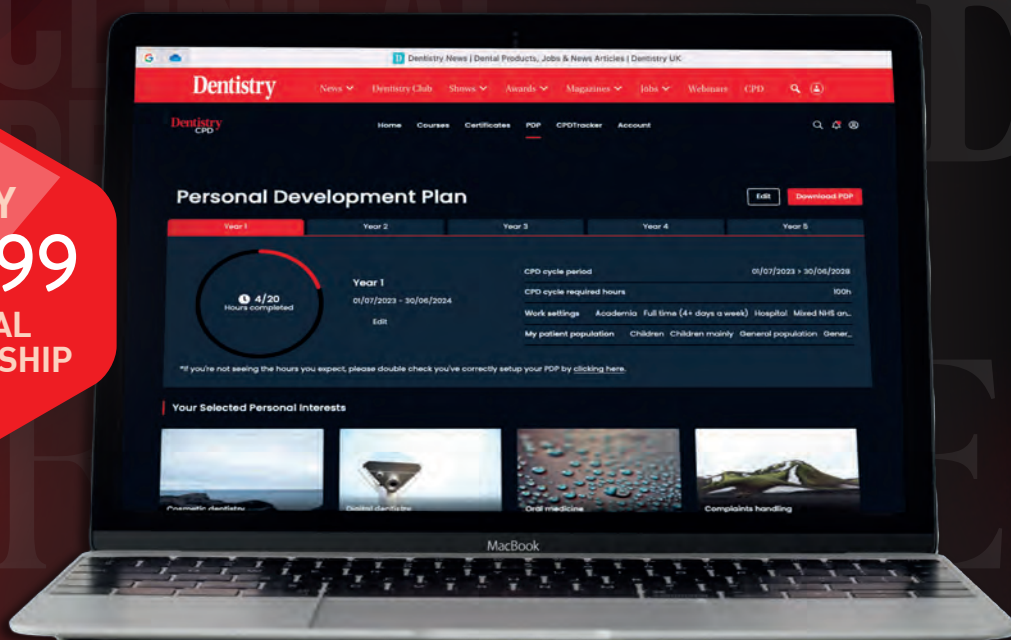
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Private Dentistry Awards: the big reveal

Presenting the winners and highly commended of the **2024 Private Dentistry Awards**

We are delighted to announce the winners and highly commended entrants from the

2024 Private Dentistry Awards!

The evening can only be described as unforgettable, with hundreds of revellers gathering on Friday 8 November at the glamorous Grosvenor House Hotel in London for this year's ceremony.

IMMENSELY SUCCESSFUL

Independently judged by professionals in the field, the Private Dentistry Awards have gone from strength to strength over the years, becoming one of the most prestigious and respected dental awards ceremonies in the UK.

From the fantastic support of our partners to the teams who put on the spectacular show, much happens behind the scenes to make such an event successful. But without you – our readers who submit the entries – the awards simply wouldn't exist. Thank you for recognising the value of entering dental awards, and seeing the benefit of displaying a winner's trophy in your practice!

We would like to extend a special thank you to Dr David Houston, who has chaired the Private Dentistry Awards since their inception in 2001.

David has helped ensure the awards stay true to their mission of recognising outstanding achievements in private dentistry by individuals and teams across the nation.

Leanna Ellis, events director at FMC, said: 'David embodies the

values that make these awards so respected – and as chair of the judging panel, he's shaped them in his image to ensure a fair, transparent judging process every year.

'Without his dedication, these awards would simply not exist, let alone reaching the heights they have today. From everyone at FMC – and from me personally – thank you, David.'

During the ceremony, David announced Dr James Goolnik as his successor, stating: 'I feel certain that the awards will flourish under his esteemed stewardship. I look forward to watching on from afar as private sector dentistry and these awards go from strength to strength in tandem.'

James is a highly respected, passionate advocate for private dentistry, and we can't wait to welcome him into the fold.

David also paid tribute to Dr Ellis Paul, editor-in-chief of *Private Dentistry* for 23 years, who passed away earlier this year.

David said: 'He was a true and sincere champion of private sector care and a pioneer in the field of four-handed dentistry. His passion and dedication to the furtherance of the possibility of a working life outside of the NHS and the promotion of these awards in seeking to recognise excellence was fundamental to the practising environment and opportunities familiar to today's dental professional.'

Without further ado, let's meet the 2024 Private Dentistry Awards winners and highly commended! Congratulations to all.

PRIVATE DENTISTRY AWARDS 2024 WINNERS

YOUNG DENTIST

Midlands

Winner: Devan Pankhania

Highly commended: Uzair Janjua

North East

Winner: Gulsh Dhanoya

North West

Winner: Surbin Gong

London

Winner: Wiktor Pietraszewski

Scotland & Northern Ireland

Winner: Christopher Jordan

South East

Winner: Yewande Oduwole

South West & Wales

Winner: May Bassett

NEW PRACTICE

North

Winner: Clear Smiles

Highly commended: Auckland Cosmetic Dental Clinic

South

Winner: Feel Good Dental

Highly commended: Smile HQ

London

Winner: Yourdental Wellness

Highly commended: Luceo Dental

Highly commended: Siha Dental Facial

MOST IMPROVED PRACTICE

South East

Winner: Red Lodge Dental Surgery
Highly commended: Biggleswade Dental Centre

London

Winner: Kai Dental

North

Winner: Sharrow Vale Dental Care

South West & Wales

Winner: Smile Orchard Dental Practice

Scotland & Northern Ireland

Winner: La Belle Dental Clinic

WEBSITE OF THE YEAR

North

Winner: Dr Rez Dental
Highly commended: Carisbrook Dental
Highly commended: Cheadle Hulme Dental & Cosmetics

South

Winner: Highfield Dental & Facial Clinic
Highly commended: Heyford Smiles
Highly commended: Kimberley Park Dental Practice

London

Winner: Siha Dental Facial
Highly commended: Brightside Dental
Highly commended: Smile Clinic Group

DIGITAL PRACTICE

North

Winner: Dr Rez Dental
Highly commended: Hermitage Dental Practice
Highly commended: The Dental Barns

South

Winner: Black Swan Dental Spa
Highly commended: Greenwich Dental Health

PRACTICE BRAND AND DESIGN

North

Winner: Dr Rez Dental

South

Winner: Didcot Dental Studio

London

Winner: Siha Dental Facial
Highly commended: Yourdental Wellness

CHILD FRIENDLY PRACTICE

North

Winner: Crown Bank Dental Implant & Cosmetic Centre

South

Winner: Love Teeth Dental
Highly commended: Graystone Referral Centre

TREATMENT OF NERVOUS PATIENTS

London

Winner: Serene Dental and Facial Aesthetics
Highly commended: Toothbeary

North

Winner: Taylored Dental Care
Highly commended: Cheadle Hulme Dental & Cosmetics

Midlands

Winner: Clear Smiles
Highly commended: Shiraz Endodontic Practice
Highly commended: The Dental Barns

South East

Winner: Tara Barry – North Hill Dental
Highly commended: Reading Dental Spa

Scotland

Winner: Dentistry on the Square
Highly commended: Tooth Doctor

South West & Wales

Winner: Inspired Dental Care
Highly commended: Norfolk House Dental Care
Highly commended: Parkway Clinic



CHILD FRIENDLY PRACTICE

North winner: Crown Bank Dental Implant & Cosmetic Centre



MOST IMPROVED PRACTICE

South East winner: Red Lodge Dental Surgery



DENTAL HYGIENIST

London winner: Sakina Syed



NEW PRACTICE
North East winner: Clear Smiles



WEBSITE OF THE YEAR
London winner: Siha Dental Facial



DENTAL THERAPIST
South winner: Chloe Sharpe

CHARITY OR COMMUNITY PROJECT

North

Winner: SA Smile Clinic

South

Winner: ODL Dental Clinic
Highly commended: Awesome Smiles
September Stations

PRACTICE MANAGER

North

Winner: Amanda Reast –
The Dental Architect
Highly commended: Lauren Toms –
Dr Rez Dental

South

Winner: Maiara Ban –
ODL Dental Clinic
Highly commended: Michelle Steffin –
Broadwater Dental Clinic

RECEPTIONIST

North

Winner: Lin Marie Melville –
Tooth Doctor

South

Winner: Esther Egan –
Widcombe Dental
Highly commended: Margaret Sutton –
Alban City Dental & Surgical Centre

DENTAL NURSE

North

Winner: Aimee McGhee
Highly commended: Lynne Johnston

South

Winner: Rebecca Silver
Highly commended: Rachel Chilcott

DENTAL HYGIENIST

South

Winner: Sarah Hardie
Highly commended: Claire
Handscomb

London

Winner: Sakina Syed

North

Winner: Kathryn Mayo

DENTAL THERAPIST

North

Winner: Jagjit Malhi
Highly commended: Neringa Babusis

South

Winner: Chloe Sharpe
Highly commended: Tracy Tang

London

Winner: Chrystal Sharp
Highly commended: Amrit Kaur

PRACTICE PRINCIPAL

London

Winner: Marisa Monteiro –
Battersea Smiles
Highly commended: Neil Shah –
Woodberry Down Dental Practice

South

Winner: Rachel Derby and Neil Evans –
Chapel Dental
Highly commended: Kaival Patel and
Shreena Patel – part of the Kana
Health Group

Midlands

Winner: Gurprit Jandu – Teeth & Face

North

Winner: Shi Karim –
Cheadle Hulme Dental & Cosmetics
Highly commended: Wajiha Basir –
Trinity House Dental Care

REFERRAL PRACTICE

North

Winner: Vermillion –
The Smile Experts Ltd

South

Winner: The Cosmetic Dental Gallery
Highly commended: Larkham House
Dental Practice

PATIENT CARE

South East

Winner: Love Teeth Dental

London

Winner: Serene Dental and Facial

Aesthetics

Highly commended: Twoth Dental + Facial Aesthetics

North

Winner: Cheadle Hulme Dental &

Cosmetics

Highly commended: Smile Stylist

Scotland

Winner: Dentistry on the Square

Highly commended: SA Smile Clinic

South West & Wales

Winner: Evolve Dentistry

Highly commended: Backwell Dental Care

TEAM OF THE YEAR

Scotland

Winner: Dentistry on the Square

Highly commended: Tooth Doctor

London

Winner: ODL Dental Clinic

Highly commended: The Behrens Dental Practice

South East

Winner: 2 Green Dental

Highly commended: Love Teeth Dental

Midlands

Winner: Clear Smiles

South West & Wales

Winner: Evolve Dentistry

Highly commended: Ruabon Road Dental Practice

North

Winner: The Waterside Dental Clinic

Highly commended: Whitefield Dental Practice

PRACTICE OF THE YEAR

London

Winner: Greenwich Dental Health

Highly commended: ODL Dental Clinic

North

Winner: Pearl Dental

Highly commended: Dr Rez Dental

Scotland & Northern Ireland

Winner: SA Smile Clinic

Highly commended: Nigel Smith Dental Care

South East

Winner: Love Teeth Dental

Highly commended: The Dental Centre Bedford

South West & Wales

Winner: Black Swan Dental Spa

Highly commended: North Cardiff Dental & Implants

PRACTICE OF THE YEAR UK

Winner: Black Swan Dental Spa

PRACTICE OF THE YEAR 2024 WINNER



PRACTICE OF THE YEAR UK
Black Swan Dental Spa

Tooth Doc

Lithusha Linganathan shares her journey of turning her dream into reality by establishing a cutting-edge dental practice in the heart of her hometown

When I graduated in 2017, I had no idea that just a few years later I would be standing in the middle of a brand-new dental practice, in the very community where I grew up. After completing my VT year and working as an associate dentist, the opportunity arose to take on a project that would change the course of my professional life, and I could not resist.

My motivation for this project was deeply personal. The area where I have established my practice isn't just any location. It is where I have spent over 20 years of my life, and I know the local community inside out, having gone to school here and formed lifelong connections. So, when I saw the availability of a building in this familiar neighbourhood, the decision to open a squat practice felt like a natural next step.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

Of course, starting this journey was not without its challenges. My biggest concern, like many in this position, was finances.

As a first-time practice owner, navigating the financial landscape was daunting. The budgeting process was intense, with unexpected costs surfacing as the project developed.

THE PRACTICE'S COLOUR SCHEME OF TEAL WITH HINTS OF GOLD, BLACK AND WHITE, CHOSEN TO AVOID THE CLINICAL 'HOSPITAL' FEEL OF BLUE OR WHITE, HAS BEEN A HIT WITH PATIENTS AND STAFF ALIKE

Financially, I prepared by discussing forecasts and business plans with advisors, securing the necessary funding, and ensuring I was well-equipped to handle the financial commitments.

Ultimately, careful planning, working closely with financial advisers, and realistic forecasting helped me stay on track.

Mentally preparing for this project was as crucial as the financial aspect. The project demanded a lot of time and energy, balancing my existing work as an associate with the development of the new practice. Time management and delegation became key skills, ensuring I did not overwhelm myself.

Choosing the site was both a practical and emotional decision. The practice is situated on a busy main road, flanked by shops and nestled between two large towns. The high footfall and proximity to new apartments made it an ideal location. I knew that by setting up shop here, I would be tapping into a thriving community, eager for new healthcare services.

Planning permission was another hurdle, but I was fortunate that the building I purchased already had the necessary licences.

With the support of Hague Dental Supplies, I navigated the complexities

Step inside...

THE PRACTICE
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253 Kingston Road
New Malden
KT3 3FN

TELEPHONE
020 3149 8197 / 07386 727051

EMAIL
reception@toothdoc.co.uk

WEBSITE
toothdoc.co.uk



The ethos

The team at Tooth Doc is committed to providing high-quality, compassionate care that is rooted in the community. The practice aims to create a welcoming environment where patients feel valued and cared for, reflecting the close-knit community that has always been a part of Lithusha's life.

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The team

PRINCIPAL DENTIST
Dr Lithusha Linganathan

DIRECTOR/BUSINESS MANAGER
Linesh Linganathan



of compliance, rules and regulations with ease. The team also provided significant guidance in selecting the right products and ensuring that everything was properly laid out and structurally sound.

Hague, along with its builders, offered extensive support throughout the process. Additionally, our radiation protection adviser and other compliance companies worked closely with Hague to ensure compliance was maintained at every step.

LESSONS LEARNED

The journey wasn't without its difficulties. Delays in planning approvals due to post-COVID backlogs tested my patience, but I managed to stay ahead by planning for these potential setbacks.

I think it is important to be realistic about time management and not overdoing it. Delegating tasks is crucial and having a good team around you to share the workload makes a world of difference, especially when you are juggling a project like this alongside another job.

Personally, I am incredibly proud of how everything turned out. The interior design, which I worked on closely with Kirsty from Hague, has been particularly well-received.

The practice's colour scheme of teal with hints of gold, black and white, chosen to avoid the clinical 'hospital' feel of blue or white, has been a hit with patients and staff alike.

If I could do anything differently, I would have liked more space, perhaps an extra room for a CT scanner, or another toilet would have been ideal. However, the practice is well-equipped for general dentistry, and I have made the most of



the space available with three fantastic surgeries.

I have also introduced new practice management software, Dentally, which has streamlined operations, allowing for remote access and better time management.

Staffing has been a challenge, particularly finding permanent dental nurses, but I am steadily building the team.

MARKETING, GROWTH AND FUTURE PLANS

Marketing the practice has required a multifaceted approach. I have leveraged social media, local newspaper articles, and the high footfall in the area to get the word out. Now that the practice is up and running, I am balancing my time between the new and old practices, ensuring both are thriving.

Professionally and personally, this project has been life changing. The rewards of seeing the practice come to life have outweighed the challenges, and I am eager to continue growing. The lessons learned – like the importance of early marketing – will guide my future endeavours, and I am excited about the possibilities ahead.

To any fellow dentist considering a similar venture, my advice is simple: be realistic, prepare thoroughly, and surround yourself with a strong team. The journey is demanding, but the rewards are immense.

Who was involved?

Practice design and interiors

Hague Dental Supplies

Builder

Alex King at Hilton Healthcare Contractors

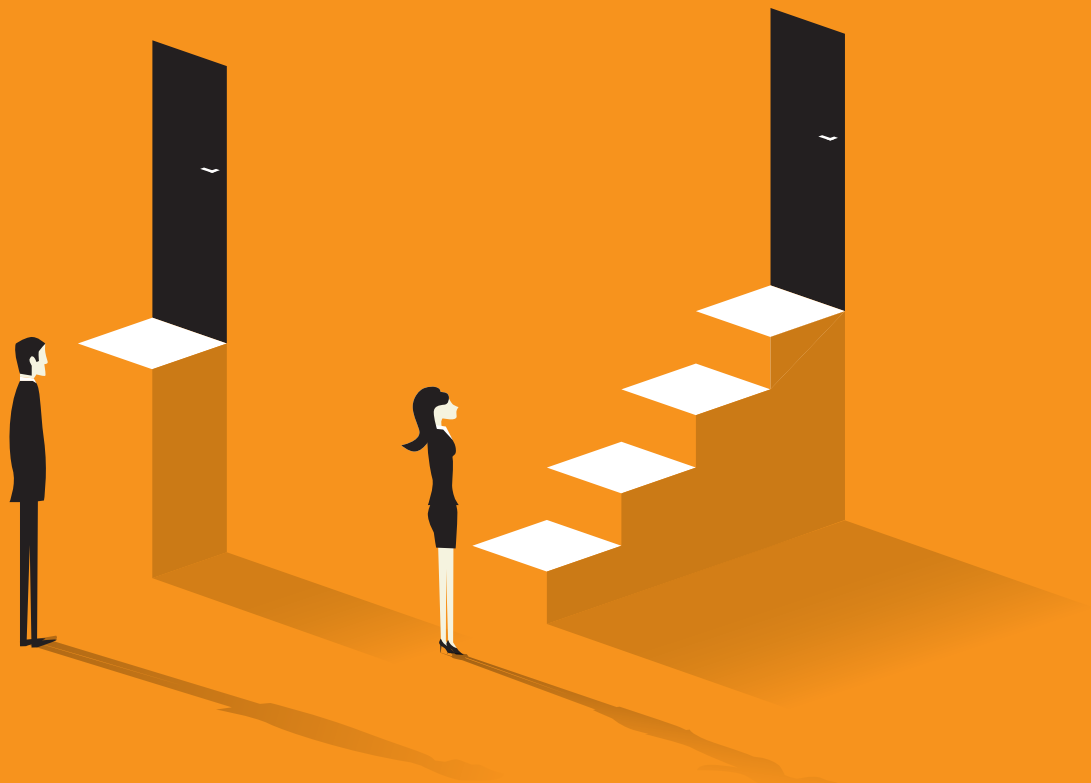
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Gary Satchi, Fairoaks Dental Surgery





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Make yourself comfortable

John Timson explores the world of patient comfort – both physical and emotional – and offers tips on how to make the dental practice as patient-friendly as possible

According to the organisation Dental Phobia, 53% of the UK population experiences fear or anxiety when visiting the dentist.

It states: 'Fear can take many forms, from slight nervousness to all-out panic.'

'For mild sufferers, visiting the dentist is an unpleasant experience. But for a significant minority of acute phobics, anxiety can be intense enough to deter visiting altogether.'

Clearly, this is an emotional reaction that needs to be addressed with kindness, patience and understanding, something that everyone in the dental profession already realises. However, have you ever considered that there are things that can be done within the physical space of the practice that can help ease such patients' concerns?

OVERCOMING TRIGGERS

The fear of losing control has been shown to be one of the more common triggers for patient anxiety (Nishi, 2022).

Building on this idea is the following example from Sylvia Njoki, writing for dentistry.co.uk: 'The abrupt movement of the chair, the tilting backwards into unfamiliar, sometimes uncomfortable positions; it isn't difficult to see why some feel anxious about attending dental appointments.'



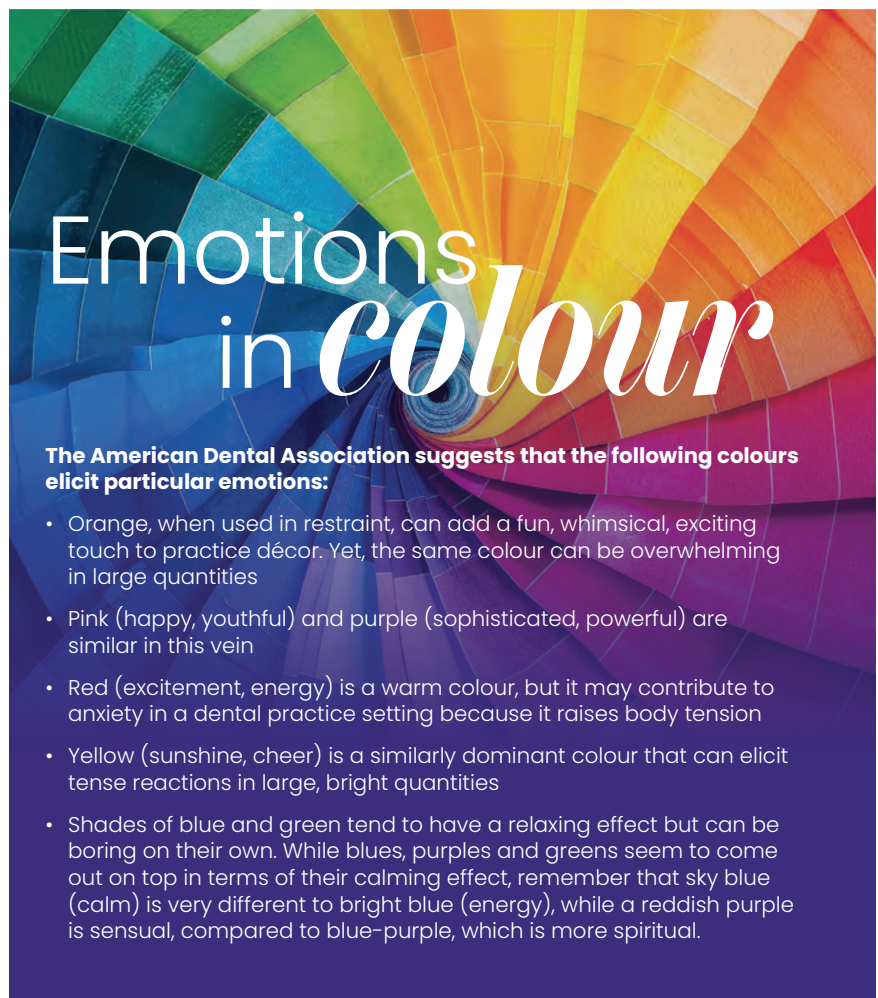
John Timson

John is A-dec's territory manager for northern England and north Wales.

Clearly, the chair in which the patient will be treated is significant, especially if the patient is likely to be seated for a prolonged period.

Offering advanced, comfort-focused dental equipment can help keep patients relaxed, especially during long procedures. For example, the A-dec 500 dental chair provides gentle, supportive comfort that puts patients

at ease for a positive experience that sets the practice apart. Also available from A-dec are chairs that offer precision hydraulic motion, allowing quiet, barely perceptible movements. Coupled with a virtual pivot, synchronising movement with the natural motion of the patient, there is no readjusting required when the chair is reclined or returned.



Emotions in colour

The American Dental Association suggests that the following colours elicit particular emotions:

- Orange, when used in restraint, can add a fun, whimsical, exciting touch to practice décor. Yet, the same colour can be overwhelming in large quantities
- Pink (happy, youthful) and purple (sophisticated, powerful) are similar in this vein
- Red (excitement, energy) is a warm colour, but it may contribute to anxiety in a dental practice setting because it raises body tension
- Yellow (sunshine, cheer) is a similarly dominant colour that can elicit tense reactions in large, bright quantities
- Shades of blue and green tend to have a relaxing effect but can be boring on their own. While blues, purples and greens seem to come out on top in terms of their calming effect, remember that sky blue (calm) is very different to bright blue (energy), while a reddish purple is sensual, compared to blue-purple, which is more spiritual.

PRACTICE DESIGN

The comfort levels on A-dec chairs have been considered from head to toe. The double articulating gliding headrest is manufactured to optimise access for the practitioner

and comfort for the patient. In addition, a toe board tilt provides the patient with comfortable support of the lower legs, all of these features work together to create a cradling effect for the patient.

What's more, because of the configurability of an A-dec chair, you can declutter the environment which then appears less intimidating for patients, because fewer, potentially worrisome-looking tools, will be on display.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF COLOUR

As well as ensuring patients are sitting comfortably, it's also worth thinking about what they are seeing. The American Dental Association discusses the importance of choosing a colour scheme within its online resources, stating: 'Whether you are remodelling your existing practice or opening a new one, choosing the right colour design can have a positive effect.'

It continues: 'There's no disputing the psychological impact of colour. Colours have historical and cultural significance. They elicit emotional responses and influence behaviour. Tranquil, relaxing combinations are known for producing cheerful calm.'

'Bright, bold schemes will likely raise a patient's anxiety level.'

Indeed, the psychology of colour was famously emphasised by Carl Jung, who stated: 'Colours are the mother tongue of the subconscious.'

In practical terms, different colours are now recognised as having either a positive or negative effect on an individual's psyche, and there's more to it than just, for instance, choosing a neutral magnolia or what you think is a 'nice' blue.

Writing in *Psychology Today* in 2010, Augustin stated: 'When you're trying to decide which colour to use on the walls or surfaces in a space, it's important to consider colour saturation and brightness. Hue is the wavelength of a colour. It's the name we use to identify it, such as "green" or "blue". "Saturation" describes colour purity – fire engine red is more



White Winchester's colour scheme promotes relaxation

saturated than maroon, for example. Brightness is, well, how bright a colour is – baby blue is brighter than navy blue, for example.'

She continues: 'Many of the colours traditionally used in children's rooms (ie, baby blue and light pink) are pleasant and relaxing. Relaxing colours are good choices not only in resting spaces, but also in places where people need to concentrate' (Augustin, 2010).

So, when considering painting the practice or, indeed, the colour of any new equipment, bear in mind that colour counts in terms of hue, saturation and lighting levels.

If you're seeking an elegant, handcrafted appearance with a sewn finish, or a sleek, streamlined design that complements formed upholstery, A-dec dental chairs offer a wide range of colours to perfectly align with the dentist's vision and the overall aesthetic of the practice.

COMBINING THE PHYSICAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

It is clear that patient comfort is paramount in reducing anxiety, and modern dentistry, with its focus on preventive rather than reactive care, requires more than a gentle touch and

a caring attitude – important though they are and always will be.

Incredible developments in equipment, tools and treatments mean that dentistry can be delivered pain-free, and this article offers insight into how the physical environment can have a significant impact on how patients feel, too. Psychology and communication-based research suggest that only 7% of communication is verbal, highlighting why the elements discussed here can go a long way in helping to relieve dental anxiety and phobia, as well as helping to motivate patients to attend the practice regularly for check-ups.

So, while many pursue the likes of hypnosis and CBT to help ease patient anxiety, phobia and pain, it is always also worth considering the environment in which you welcome patients, making efforts to make the surroundings as comfortable as possible, whether that means considering the functionality of equipment or the décor.

For article references, email siobhan.hiscott@fmc.co.uk.

For more information, visit unitedkingdom.a-dec.com, email info@a-dec.co.uk or call 0800 233285.

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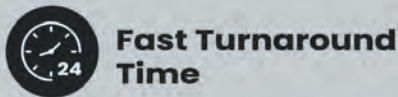
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A spotlight on the market landscape

Joel Mannix outlines a number of the key market trends in private dentistry and reveals some of the expectations for the sector in the year ahead

Q Can you start by giving us an overview of the current UK dental market? What are some of the key trends typifying the private marketplace?

A In recent times, financial shifts have influenced transaction volumes and buyer interest within the dental sector. However, amidst these changes, the market has undergone a healthy recalibration. Although this adjustment period presented challenges, it is paving the way for a noticeable boost in market confidence and more consistent activity, signifying a promising shift in the industry's dynamics.

Regarding key trends in the private market, over the last two to three years, there has been a significant increase in demand for private dental services, and high-end treatments such as full arch implant cases, quick orthodontic cases, and high-end cosmetic procedures, in particular. However, in the last 12 months, we've seen a slowdown in high-end treatments but an increase in general dentistry.

There will always be a demographic seeking high-end treatments, but the volume isn't as high as before. Associates are increasingly looking to work in private practices, which typically face fewer recruitment issues compared with NHS practices.



Joel Mannix

Joel started his career at Christie & Co in 2018. Since then, he has sold practices for clients, from single asset sales to larger group transactions, and has been involved in some landmark sales. He was appointed as the company's head of dental in 2024, where he spearheads the brokerage side of the business, leading an award-winning team of regional dental business advisers.

Q What is the current appetite for private practices and how has this changed in recent years?

A The appetite from the independent first-time buyer and existing owner segment continues to recognise a fairly even spread in demand for all practice types and revenue mixes in 2024, which is broadly the same as what we saw in 2023. Additionally, the appetite for private or private-led mixed practices from small groups has remained fairly consistent, at 38% of offers received in 2023 versus 54% of offers received in 2024.

Conversely, corporate buyers have shifted their appetite dramatically away from practices where the leading income is NHS. Where, in 2023, offers for this type of practice (NHS mixed or fully NHS) accounted for some 57% of offers received, this has reduced to just 8% in 2024, with the other 92% being focused on mixed private or fully private practices.

Interest is led by available market stock and in the bandings of pricing that would more commonly align with the various buyer types.

Q There has been widespread coverage of corporate disposals in the market. How has this impacted independent sales?

A The impact has been overwhelmingly positive. These formerly corporate practices are returning to independent ownership, where the working principal can inject new life into the business.

This transition often leads to improved patient care and a

more personalised service, as independent owners are typically more invested in the day-to-day operations. While some of these practices are being 'flipped' for quick profit, the majority are being retained by the buyers for the long-term.

This stability is beneficial for both the practice and its patients, fostering a more consistent and dedicated approach to dental care.

Q What kind of changes are you seeing in deal structures?

A In 2023, certain corporate buyers exhibited extreme caution, this was evident in their proposal of deal structures whereby an overly opportunistic 40% to 45% of the offer was being deferred.

However, this approach was quickly recognised as unsustainable. The current market is witnessing a correction towards a more normalised deferment rate of approximately 30%.

This adjustment reflects a balanced approach to risk management and capital deployment, aligning more closely with buyer and seller expectations.

Previously, Dentex was known for its distinctive approach to acquisitions, often presenting shared equity and upside deal structures to principals. However, such practices have become less frequent following Portman Dental Care's merger with Dentex in April 2023, which has opened the door for other groups to step in and fill the void with more innovative models.

These new entrants are seizing the opportunity to differentiate themselves in the marketplace by offering arrangements that provide significant post-completion financial benefits to retained principals.

Whether through equity conversions of deferred payments or performance-related cash bonuses, these emerging models are designed to align with specific targets, including adjustments for inflation, making them increasingly attractive in the current economic backdrop.

This shift signals a vibrant evolution in the landscape of dental practice acquisitions, offering principals diverse pathways to realise the value of their sales.

Q What are you seeing with regards to pricing?

A Christie & Co has seen the market reset to now be driven by independent buyers.

While the market isn't seeing prices reach the peak of what was being achieved in 2022, we always knew that this was never going to be sustainable and was somewhat artificial due to corporates aggressively acquiring as they were gearing up for sale themselves, or new private equity investment was being sought for an existing platform. This spike was also behind a lot of paused acquisition activity post-pandemic, as buyers were catching up on their targets.

What we're seeing now is a much more sustainable market – overall, good results are still being achieved and deals are better due to cleaner post-sale conditions, such as all money upfront and often no tie-ins or targets.

This shift has made transactions more straightforward and attractive for sellers who can enjoy immediate financial benefits without the complexities of deferred payments or performance-based conditions.

Also, as interest rates decrease, we expect prices and multiples to rise, making the market more dynamic and potentially more lucrative.

This trend indicates a healthy and evolving market, where independent buyers play a crucial role in shaping the future landscape of private dental practice ownership.



Q You distributed a sentiment survey earlier this year, the results of which were published in your report. What were the key findings from that?

A That's right, in May we reached out to more than 35,000 dental professionals – including the largest corporates, medium-sized and smaller groups, and independent practice owners – to get their views on a range of topics.

The survey pulled out some really interesting sentiments, especially with regards to the private sector, including the fact that owners of private-led practices have a less negative sentiment than those with NHS income.

It is expected that the majority of future growth will be driven by general dentistry and specialist services, followed by hygiene, and 60% of respondents felt that digital dentistry is going to be at the forefront of this growth in the sector.

The majority of respondents (59%) felt that the ORE entrance exams, which provide additional access to dentists, will increase service delivery across a combination of private and NHS dentistry services.

Meanwhile, 35% of respondents felt that both NHS and private dentistry will benefit, and a smaller proportion felt that either NHS or private dentistry would specifically see an increase in service delivery.

Q What do you expect to see from the private market in the year ahead?

A We may see practices with NHS contracts taking on more private income over the next 12 months and even, in some cases, handing contracts back. This shift is likely driven by the increasing financial pressures and the desire for more revenue streams.

Additionally, we predict a continued rise in demand for digital dentistry and advanced dental technologies, as practices strive to enhance patient care and operational efficiency.

As economic conditions stabilise and consumer confidence grows, we anticipate a gradual increase in patient spending on elective and cosmetic dental procedures. This trend will likely bolster the private dental market, making it a more vibrant and competitive space in the coming year.

With regards to risk appetite, previously, corporates may have acquired practices with associates on lower rates of remuneration, but now this may be seen as an operational risk if they have to replace an associate on a higher percentage if that associate leaves, thus impacting EBITDA margin.

Visit www.christie.com/dental-market-review-2024 to read *Christie & Co's Dental Market Review 2024 report*.

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What is *goodwill value?*

Simon Cosgrove highlights why it's so important for practice owners to understand the goodwill value of their practice

The goodwill value describes the intangible assets of the value of a dental practice. It comprises elements such as the location, patient base and loyalty, brand reputation, quality of care, practitioner skill and so forth – all of which form a substantial portion of the overall value of the practice. Goodwill value is a core element of a dental practice and often worth considerably more than in other types of businesses.

Having a clear understanding of what constitutes goodwill and how to measure it is important in a number of circumstances where there is a need to determine the value of the practice.

Its significance typically arises during preparation for the sale of the practice, where a formal valuation is undertaken by a chartered surveyor. There are, however, other reasons for which it may need to be established, primarily for financial planning.

It may be that the owners are looking to protect their share of the value of the business – something that could form part of their wider retirement plans and beyond into estate planning, or it may be necessary to determine the value for the restructure of the practice – if, for example, a dentist is considering changing from being a sole trader into a limited company.

The National Association of Specialist Dental Accountants & Lawyers (NASDAL) publishes a quarterly benchmarking and statistics survey. The report pools information collated from accountant and lawyer members of NASDAL to offer a useful guide to the practice sales market.

It is important to note that the report produces an average profile, and the statistics should be treated as guideline only as there are also a number of other factors that may impact the individual value of any one practice, such as trends in dentistry and what's happening in the local area with other practices. Therefore, while the data is useful, it is important how it is interpreted and to

seek guidance from somebody who understands the industry.

GOODWILL VALUE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING

When it comes to retirement planning, the proceeds of the sale of the practice may be factored into income or capital requirements in retirement, making it important to consider how goodwill value could potentially impact those retirement plans.

There is also another consideration, and that is thinking about the impact the value of the practice could have if an owner, partner or shareholder unfortunately doesn't reach retirement.



Simon Cosgrove

Simon is a dental regional manager at Wesleyan Financial Services, guiding a team of dental specialist financial advisers to support dentists, their families, and their practices with financial planning to secure their financial future.



The latter of these two scenarios addresses the element of protecting the practice. To give an example, let's imagine two practice principals – each of whom has a 50% share of the practice. If one of them were to pass away while they still owned the practice, it is likely that their family would be entitled to their share of the value.

The two joint owners of the dental practice are in a partnership agreement – in this hypothetical scenario, the practice is worth £2.3m with a 50% share for each partner. One of the partners, however, suddenly passes away; under the partnership agreement, the remaining partner is required to pay £1.15m to the family of the deceased, for their share of the practice.

The remaining partner is 52 years of age and had been planning to retire age 60 but is now faced with an immediate choice (assuming the bereaved family don't want to be involved in the running of a dental practice). Do they now sell both shares of the practice to raise the £1.15m or do they try to operate the practice alone and take out a loan to pay out the family of the deceased partner?

Let's suppose they opted for the latter and borrowed £1.15m to be paid off over eight years at an interest rate of 8%. This would mean that their monthly repayments would be approximately £16,257 a month and that over the eight-year period they would pay a total of £1.56m – an unexpected cost that could well impact their retirement plans.

Had both partners sought specialist guidance and ensured that they understood the goodwill value of their practice, and that the right business agreements were in place, underpinned by the appropriate protection, this difficult situation could have been more manageable.

If you are in a partnership and your partner passes away, you would ultimately have to choose one of three options – the first being that if you couldn't afford to buy out your former partner's family, you would have to accept them as partners in the business (silent or otherwise!) and continue to pay them a profit share, regardless of the fact that they probably have no skills in dentistry and can't add any value to the business.

The second option is taking out a loan and paying a considerable amount of additional interest. The third option (which must be taken before any critical illness or death occurs) is to accept that you need to protect the value of the practice to ensure that there is enough money available to pay the family should the unexpected occur, so that the practice (and also the retirement plans of the principal dentist) is not financially disadvantaged by the death or serious illness of a partner and business can continue as usual.

SEEKING PROFESSIONAL GUIDANCE

This is where it is useful to seek specialist guidance and surround yourself with a circle of trust, where your dental specialist tax accountant, specialist financial adviser and solicitor are all experts who understand dental practices and are willing to work together to ensure that your business is protected and that your retirement plans are on track.

Book a financial review with Wesleyan Financial Services by visiting www.wesleyan.co.uk/financial-advice/dentists or calling 0808 1499416.



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Dental photography – time to focus

Minesh Patel highlights how powerful visual communication can create meaningful connections with patients – and boost your bottom line

A powerful photo can enhance every aspect of dentistry. High-quality visuals are the most effective tools for clear, impactful communication. It can help attract new patients, boost treatment acceptance, encourage compliance, and improve education. A great image doesn't just tell a story; it builds trust, deepens patient understanding and drives engagement.

Whether showcasing a smile transformation or guiding a patient through their treatment journey, the right photo can make a significant difference.

Detailed images also aid in diagnostics, support the discussion of treatment options, and even offer a visual preview of potential outcomes. Such visual transparency empowers patients to understand their oral health status to make informed decisions, strengthening the consent process – and supporting ethical dentistry. Many clinicians also use high-quality images to promote their services on social media platforms and practice websites, making visual content an essential part of their marketing strategies. Beyond promotion, photography inevitably plays a crucial role in legal and clinical documentation.



Minesh Patel

Minesh is a cosmetic dentist based in Epsom, Surrey. A graduate of Bart's and The London with an MSc in Aesthetic Dentistry from King's College London, he has a special interest in aesthetic dentistry. He has completed advanced training in implant dentistry and periodontology. He is the creator of the F:ocus dental photography training course and product range.

Strong photography skills can be a game-changer, and their impact on a business can be truly transformative.

Minesh Patel's philosophy has redefined his approach to dental delivery, which has, in turn, enhanced his professional growth. A cosmetic dentist based in Epsom, Surrey, he merges clinical precision with an artistic flair – and much of this is due to his ability to harness the power of the camera lens.

Through his initiative, F:ocus Bounce, he goes beyond teaching the fundamentals. Here, he shares his equipment, technique, and presentation expertise to share some of the fundamentals of his dental photography masterclass.

Q How does high-quality photography impact a dental practice's brand and patient trust?

A Hugely! My photography journey started during foundation training when I used a simple intraoral camera to photograph, document and explain common problems to my patients.

Dental decay, cracks, and gum disease are often not accompanied by pain, so these photos became invaluable, especially since patients usually hesitate to invest in treatments for issues they cannot feel or see.

This is particularly true when meeting a new dentist for the first time. Seeing the photos sparks an

Photographic equipment must-haves

1. Mirrorless camera body with a 1:1 macro lens
2. Ergonomically balanced lens-to-body weight ratio
3. Using a crop sensor camera body with a smaller lens (60mm)
4. Using a full-frame camera body with a longer lens (100mm)
5. Lightweight as possible using a wireless twin flash
6. A separate pro lighting system if studio portraits are required.

instant ‘a-ha’ moment for patients. Often surprised by the images, they quickly grasp the reality of their dental health, making them more open to treatments. This is paramount when building trust – and documenting the medicolegal consultation process.

Q What elements of dental photography make it compelling?

A I soon saw the merits of having a camera. I began documenting procedures, taking the opportunity to take quick snaps of all my tooth preparations and fillings (good and bad). I used these to find areas of improvement with my trainer, and the process proved pivotal. Photography became my teacher, and I quickly excelled to new heights through observation, intuition and reflection.

The by-product of photography was improved technical skills. But, just as importantly, it brought self-accountability, joy, and motivation, and I was able to build a portfolio of which I was proud. This allowed me to better handle the lows in dentistry by capturing the little wins – where and when I could.

This entire philosophy formed the cornerstone of what is now F:ocus, and why I feel the industry has embraced the photography courses so well.

Q How important is it for a dental practice to invest in professional-level photography equipment and training?

A Professional photography is a powerful tool for elevating your career. It fosters pride, joy, enthusiasm and a renewed perspective on your work.

Financially, the return on this investment often comes through meaningful conversations with your patients – those with advanced tooth wear, crowding, or silently failing restorations.

Your high-quality images can be the turning point for patients, helping them see their conditions clearly and motivating them to take action rather than putting off treatment for years.

I don’t believe in ‘selling dentistry’. Instead, many of my full mouth rehabilitation and complex interdisciplinary cases have come from patients truly understanding their condition through visual evidence. And it has been the photographs that have provided them with the self-awareness they need to make that decision – as well as my good looks and killer charm!

Q What are the essential first steps for newcomers to photography to make it an effective tool for clinical documentation and business growth?

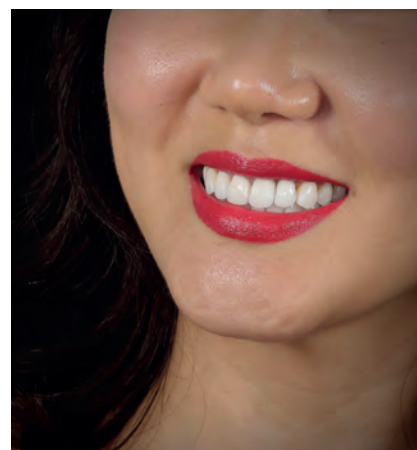
A Anyone who values their brand should avoid using stock imagery. Building a portfolio of before and after photos using your different procedures is a great start. The images should be authentic and used to help explain routine procedures to patients confidently.

Aim to take pictures at the same distance, position and angulation to build consistency. The result will be a collection that looks polished and presentable.

Q What are the key factors you consider when selecting equipment for dental photography?

A For me, it has always been about ergonomics. I always aim to implement ‘low friction’ systems – in dentistry and life in general. This means investing in utility that reduces the time and effort needed to perform something positive like dental photography. My wife is still angry that I bought another coffee machine for the bedroom to encourage me to get up earlier!

I provide an up-to-date free camera buying guide on www.focusbounce.com/cameraguide. My advice is based on years of experience and trying out every set-up with my dentist hat on. All the set-ups I advise feel balanced in the hand, are as light as possible, have deep, comfortable grips and are the easiest and most fun. And, if your direct composite veneers are shockingly bad, maybe some baby oil to rub over those rough margins!



Clinical case demonstration use of the F:ocus kit and techniques to photograph consistent before and after smile views, close-up intraoral views and lab work photography and professional face views

Q When showcasing the beauty of photography, how essential are lighting, framing and presentation?

A Lighting is the most critical determinant of how any photo will look. The larger the light source (flash), the more pleasing to the eye the image becomes. This is why photos taken on our phones look fantastic outdoors on a nice day, as we have a significant light source in the sky. We can use diffusers over our flashes in dentistry to create a more professional and textured 3D feel to the image.

We provide a solution as part of our all-inclusive Focus course kit options. Without proper framing, even the well-lit photos can look suboptimal. Once you have the correct lighting and can position yourself and your patient for the optimal frame, your work will look ready to be published in a magazine.

Q Are there any common mistakes dentists make when using images in their marketing?

A Poorly framed photos and inconsistent exposure are a problem. Lack of framing means that these photos are 'taken' but not 'composed', which translates to wonky angles, out-of-focus teeth and images that may be of different sizes before and after.

Inconsistent exposure occurs from poor flash control, leading to images that may be too bright and too dark, which can be misleading when marketing cosmetic procedures such as whitening and veneers.

My golden rule for accurate photos is quickly drying the teeth and gums before shooting. This simple step helps reduce glare from saliva, allowing light to reflect off the actual surface of the teeth. This enhances the visibility of natural anatomy and any imperfections, giving a more honest view of your work and enabling you to better showcase results.

Q 'Turn your work into a game, and you will never have to work a day in your life' – how does this ideology shape your approach?

A This idea has guided the gamification of my work. People often ask about the strategies behind my large following on @mineshpatel_dentistry and @focus.bounce. To build this presence, I needed a plan.

Social media became my accountability partner, pushing me to deliver top-level technical performance in the lab and practice consistently. Each post on my page is thoughtfully composed and framed to resonate with viewers, especially other dentists. Social media became my digital portfolio, and the 'game' was to incorporate art and precision into every detail of my work.

Completing one case led to discussions with my lab, finding ways to improve the next, experimenting with new techniques and sharing that growth with the world.

Now, after 15 years, I approach even routine tasks, like a class II composite, with an artist's eye – capturing a perfectly aligned lateral matrix shot to showcase the precision and beauty that our profession allows.

Looking back through my posts, I can see my journey unfold, each image a reminder of how I've levelled up in my game of growth.

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The key to a successful practice

Barry Oulton explains to Michelle Hardy how, by concentrating on the patient journey, he built a successful practice with minimal external marketing



Michelle Hardy: I want to focus on the patient journey, which is something I know you're passionate about, Barry. What would you define as the perfect patient experience in a dental practice?

Barry Oulton: For me, the patient journey begins before they even come inside the practice, which I'm sure you'll agree.

When I presented Practice Plan's workshop tour, we looked at the patient journey and broke it into 15 touchpoints.

A touchpoint is any moment that an organisation can interact with a customer or potential customer.



Michelle Hardy

Michelle is a sales support manager at Practice Plan, a leading provider of practice-branded patient membership plans. Michelle has been with Practice Plan for 19 years and has 25 years' experience in dentistry.



Dr Barry Oulton

Barry is a dentist, business owner, lecturer, coach and mentor. Barry is the dental coach to ensure you achieve more – more patients, more balance and more income. Working closely with practice owners and associates, he facilitates their growth and development to achieve higher incomes with increased patient satisfaction and five-star reviews, recommendations and referrals.

Obviously, that starts with your kerbside appeal, social media image and branding. At our practice, rather than viewing this journey as just one thing, we looked at each of the steps within the journey to see how we could make every one of them the best version of themselves.

The first touchpoint is 'how do we attract patients to the practice?' And the last touchpoint is 'how do we ask our happy patients to recommend their friends, family, colleagues, and neighbours?' In my view, the last one and the first one loop back to each other. This is because the way we attracted our patients was to focus on our existing patients, 'knock their socks off' and then ask them to recommend us to their family and friends. However, the first touchpoint also includes marketing, your website, branding, and everything else you put out in the public domain.

When it comes to patients' experience in the practice, it's about encouraging an atmosphere, an environment and behaviours that make them feel as comfortable as possible given that they're in a dental practice setting.

Make your dentistry as comfortable as possible, which means having really great techniques and then being aware of how best to communicate with each individual patient based on how they like to be communicated with.

Michelle: I agree that everything starts well before the patient gets through the door. So, are there any little extra touches that you use to make it a memorable experience for your patient? You touched on comfort so can you give some tips on how you go about making your patients feel that it's a comfortable experience for them from the moment they walk through your doors?

Barry: Yes. The language that we use in our head weaves magic. Our brains can't process a negative. So, if I said to you 'there won't be any pain with this procedure', you first have to formulate a picture in your head of what pain is in order to then appreciate what pain isn't. So, by saying that, I've generated a negative image, and I've connected the procedure to pain, even though my intention is to reassure you that you're going to be comfortable.

BEST PRACTICE

So, first and foremost is to use the right language. Not only the language we use in our marketing, but also as soon as people are in the building we should use positive affirmative language about what it is we will be doing, not what we will be avoiding. So, rather than saying 'there won't be any pain', we say 'everything we'll do is completely comfortable'.

I am a master practitioner of neuro linguistic programming (NLP) and when I did my training I learned about 'anchoring'. An example of that might be when you hear a song, and it takes you back in time to a memory. That's called an anchor, and we can anchor a state of feeling. We can do that with our patients too.

I want to anchor them to me being comfortable, everything being carefully looked after and them having a feeling of comfort when they see me. That truly worked for me because we didn't really do any marketing for 18 years.

All our patients came to us by word of mouth and our amazing Google reviews. I became known as being the comfortable dentist. So, it's the little things that make a big difference.

Michelle: I know that you, like me, have worked with lots of practices in your time, so can you give an example of one that you really think is a standout in terms of the way they deliver their patient care and the experience for the patients, and what is it that it sets them apart from the rest?

Barry: I work with a few great practices right now and what really sets them apart is the experience they provide for their patients and not necessarily the dentistry.

Obviously, your dentistry has to be good but, to be honest, patients care way more about their experience of the dentistry rather than the dentistry itself. So, if your dentistry is a 10 out of 10 but it's uncomfortable and/or the patient didn't 'feel' looked after at any point, it doesn't matter to the patient how good the dentistry was.

What patients care about is how they're looked after and how they have the dentistry delivered to them. It's about how they're cared for, before, during, and after. It's especially about how they're looked after if there's a problem, such as a cancellation or



IT'S A GREAT PATIENT EXPERIENCE THAT REALLY STANDS OUT ALONG WITH REPUTATION, BRAND AND OUR VALUES

something happens. It's the whole experience that really matters.

And so, the practices that stand out are the ones that understand that. It's the ones that make the patient journey, the patient experience and the patient care the absolute epicentre of everything they do. They just happen to be doing dentistry.

So, when they really focus on knocking the patient's socks off and making sure the patient has the best experience, funnily enough, they end up being able to do more dentistry because happy patients want to do more dentistry. They'll start to do the wants-based dentistry, which means they're more inclined to take up cosmetic procedures and so on.

The practices that I believe are really nailing it are the ones that are consistently looking at improving their patient experience and putting it at the forefront of what they do.

Michelle: Absolutely. Things are changing all the time so, looking ahead, what do you anticipate we are going to be doing in the future to elevate that patient experience? Because it's an evolving cycle, isn't it, to keep looking at what you're doing. Do you see any sort of trends coming along that you think are going to have a bigger impact?

Barry: Trends? I don't know if I'm honest. However, I do think that practices that really focus on improving every element of the

patient journey will be stronger, more robust and more financially sound than those that don't.

As I said earlier, it's not about the dentistry, although that's important. What's most important is the customer journey. So, you need to have good dentistry but that isn't enough. It's a great patient experience that really stands out along with reputation, brand and our values. Our values of integrity, honesty and transparency.

So, a trend may be that people become more focused on the patient journey. If you look at the dentistry shows, the focus is on the latest treatment. What's next in what we can do to patients and it's less about what we can do with patients and for patients. And I think maybe the trend will begin to swing. There are always going to be technological innovations such as new treatments and new modalities, but the thing that doesn't change is the personal interaction. We're not going to be replaced yet by AI and robots. And so, I would love there to be a trend all about patient care and experience.

To listen to the podcast version of this conversation, visit practiceplan.co.uk/podcasts/the-perfect-patient-experience-with-dr-barry-oulton.

Get in touch with Practice Plan – call 01691 684165 or visit www.practiceplan.co.uk/be-practice-plan.

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How to prepare for a CQC inspection

Lamia Murray shares her experience and insights on how best to prepare for CQC inspections and manage compliance to alleviate stress

Navigating the intricate landscape of dental practice management involves more than just overseeing day-to-day operations. For a practice manager, ensuring that both the staff and patients receive optimal care while maintaining compliance with regulatory standards is paramount.

THE DAILY GRIND OF A PRACTICE MANAGER

As a practice manager, the responsibility of the daily running and management of a dental practice falls solely on your shoulders. This role demands a precise approach to ensure that all aspects of the practice run smoothly, in the best interest of both the staff and the patients. A significant part of this involves keeping up with daily and weekly compliance tasks. However, the sheer volume of compliance requirements can be overwhelming.

For many practice managers, staying on top of these tasks is time-consuming and often leads to burnout. The imminent pressure of an upcoming CQC inspection can heighten this stress, particularly when last minute preparations are required.

STAYING ON TRACK WITH COMPLIANCE

The key to managing compliance without giving into stress lies in consistent and proactive planning. Here are some strategies that I have found effective in staying on top of dental compliance.

1. Dedicate time for compliance reviews

Setting aside dedicated time to regularly review compliance and CQC requirements is essential. During these sessions, ask yourself these critical questions:

- What do you need for the next inspection?
- What will CQC ask for?
- Has everything been completed and documented?
- Can you provide sufficient evidence for all compliance activities?

2. Maintain details logs

Keeping comprehensive logs for all maintenance and service certificates, audits and risk assessments is crucial.

If any discrepancies or gaps are identified, prioritise addressing these issues promptly.

Ensure that staff profiles and folders are up-to-date with their CPD attached. Being proactive in rectifying any shortcomings demonstrates a commitment to maintaining high standards.

3. Delegate tasks to senior team members

Involving senior team members, such as head nurses and head receptionists, can significantly lighten the load. These individuals can assist with tasks that you may not have time to complete.

Delegation is not a sign of weakness, but a practical approach to managing workload effectively. It also provides team members with opportunities for professional growth and responsibility.

4. Seeking support and delegating responsibility

The role of a practice manager comes with inherent stress and pressure. It is important to recognise the importance of asking for support when needed.

Do not hesitate to delegate tasks to capable team members. Many dental care professionals are eager to take on additional responsibilities, and by entrusting them with these tasks you can reduce your own stress while ensuring the practice remains compliant.

CONCLUSION

Maintaining compliance and preparing for CQC inspections need not be a source of constant anxiety. By dedicating time to compliance reviews, maintaining details logs and leveraging the support of senior team members, practice managers can manage their responsibilities more effectively.

Remember, seeking help and delegating tasks are not signs of inadequacy but smart strategies for ensuring the smooth operation of a dental practice.

These insights underscore the importance of proactive planning and support systems in managing the complexities of dental compliance. By adopting these practices, practice managers can navigate their roles with greater ease and confidence, ensuring their practices meet regulatory standards while fostering a positive work environment.



Lamia Murray

Lamia is a registered dental nurse and practice manager.

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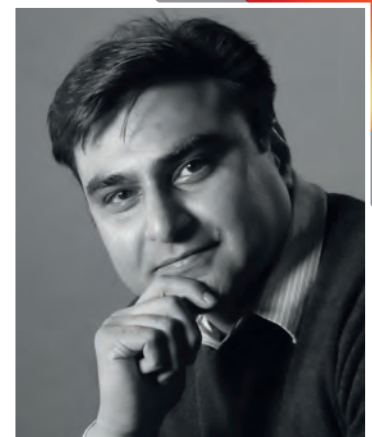
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Dr Nadeem Younis BDS MSC DGD(UK) DPDS,
Principal dentist at Bridge Dental Practice, Burnley



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Juggling dentistry with running a business

Smita Mehra shares how dentist owners can successfully juggle clinical dentistry with running a practice and business

Are you a principal dentist who is juggling the work of clinical dentistry with trying to grow and develop a business? Do you find that there are constant challenges that you have to try and mediate while also keeping yourself involved in the wet-hand clinical side of the job? You aren't alone.

In fact, there are many practice owners around the UK that are trying to do just that, balance both dentistry and growing their business. However, while most dentists understand that both need adequate attention, many do not know where to start or feel overwhelmed at the prospect of it all. But getting to grips with these challenges and finding a good balance between them can be key to staying on top of it all.

In this article, I will share a glimpse of how I do both, so other practice leaders can bring their visions to life.

INVEST

First and foremost, if you are a dentist who is trying to grow your business while also keeping a hand in the clinical dentistry side of things, it is vital that you invest your own time into the practice, as well as into resources and people who are going to help you get there.

When starting your own practice, it can be hard to let go of physically doing the job that you trained and worked so hard for over many years. However, it is vital that you can take a step back, so

you can invest time into setting out and achieving the goals that you want to.

I was very lucky that when I started The Neem Tree Dental Practices, my husband already had a business, Samera, who was able to support me and on the financial side of things from the get-go.

Samera brings together chartered accountants and dental business growth experts to offer advice to help you grow your business while you focus on the important clinical aspects.

This meant that, though I did want to get my hands stuck in on the business side of things to build my brand, I was still able to focus on the dentistry side of our practice as well as looking at people management, and the marketing aspects too.

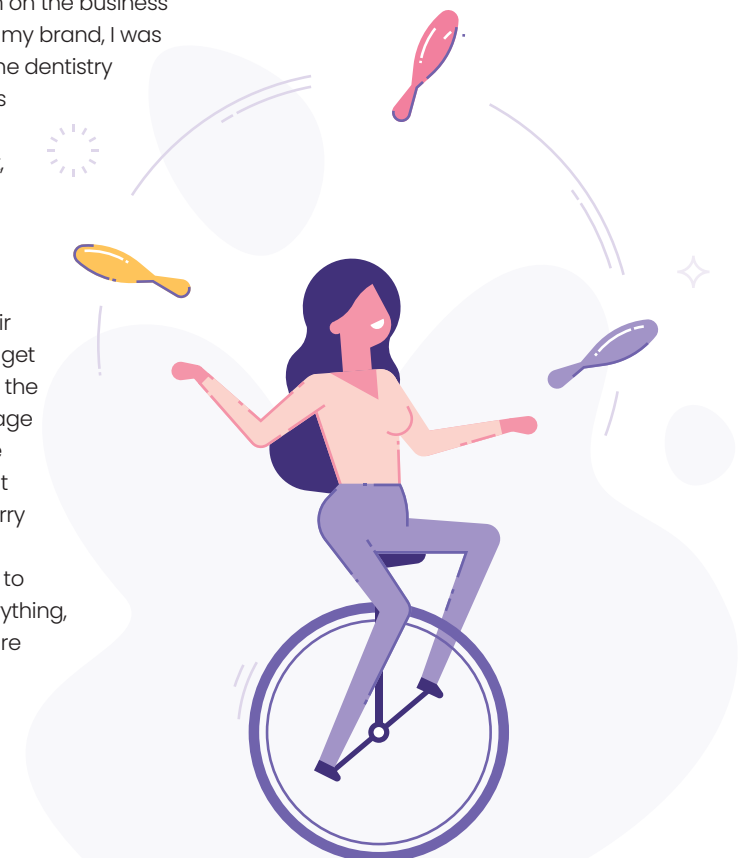
Therefore, it is essential for those that want to have their clinics grow that they get people onboard from the outset who can manage certain aspects of the business for them that they don't have to worry about.

While it can be easy to say that you'll do everything, as a brand grows, there becomes a greater need for you to be in many places at once, so having a good team around you is vital for success.

RECRUITMENT

Recruiting the right team who will actually be doing the day-to-day running of your clinic is also extremely important when trying to juggle dentistry with growing a business.

To start, you need to decide what exactly it is you need to make your project come to life in the way that you had planned. For example, do you need five dentist chairs, a receptionist, nurses on hand, and a hygienist? Or can you manage everything clinical on your own with just one person as support?



Smita Mehra

Smita is principal dentist at The Neem Tree Dental Practices.

BEST PRACTICE

Getting that down is the most important first step when it comes to growing your brand.

Once you know exactly who you are looking for, you then need to highlight the required skills that are essential to your business and will keep patients coming back to you time and time again. For The Neem Tree Dental Practices, even though finding dentists with the best qualifications and skills out there were essential for us when recruiting, it was also important to us that whoever we hired had the right personality and people skills too.

Essentially, I put myself in the place of the patient. What would the patient want when it came to getting treatment from a dentist that would keep them coming back time and again? Would they feel comfortable around this person?

Following this recruitment process not only meant that I had a solid foundation

to build my business upon, but I was also able to eventually take a step back from being so wet-handed in the dentistry side of things.

Now, I only get involved as and when I'm needed. There was once a time where I had a solid list of patients whom I would see on a regular basis, but now I leave that in the hands of my capable associates. I now have time to focus on working on the business rather than working in it.

Having this clear path of recruitment and building this team around you will reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed for those who are aiming to build a business while still doing dentistry.

EMPLOYEE WELLBEING AND STAFF RETENTION

Practice managers and those who are trying to juggle a fine balance between clinical dentistry and running a business should also consider a plan to look after employee wellbeing and retain staff.

Dentistry can be an extremely stressful industry that can take its toll on dentists very quickly, and if their wellbeing is not managed properly by practice owners and managers, you could find yourself without the people you need to keep both your business and practice going long-term.

The way I have always done this at The Neem Tree, and it has always been a big part of my ethos as a practice owner and principal dentist, is to respect every single team member that we have, no matter their role, and really get to know them. We have a family atmosphere where everyone looks out for each other, and as a result, there is excellent teamwork. We also make sure to treat them from time to time, in different ways, whether it's dinners or trips abroad.

But it's not just money, it's looking out for their emotional wellbeing too. This is really important to retaining and keeping the staff you have to make your business successful. I often make time to check in with my staff members myself, as well as their line managers, to check they are doing ok and able to handle the stressful nature of the job.

As a result, I have had dentists that have stayed with me since the start. It is the nature of any business that people will come and go to chase new opportunities, but if you can sustain and

have a core team that you truly respect and care for, you can build a solid foundation for success when juggling both dentistry and growing a business.

COMMUNICATION

Finally, a key part of growing your business, while working in dentistry at the same time, is spending time working on communication, both externally and internally.

Once you have hired and retained the core team you need for your business to run, you then need to spend time working on how you communicate with them. This means having meetings quarterly, monthly, and weekly to update them on the business side of things.

At The Neem Tree, I make it my business to have regular meetings with practice managers to make sure I know of any problems and things going on that I need to be aware of. I also make sure my practice managers keep an open dialogue with our teams about their wellbeing, as well as making sure everyone knows who they can speak to if they have any issues, including myself.

When you have focused on working on your internal communication, you also need to think about how you are going to communicate your business to prospective clients. Whether that be through marketing, PR agencies or something else.

Again, I've been very lucky that Samera has been on hand to assist with this. But developing a marketing strategy should be a key goal of any practice manager trying to grow and juggle their business.

Often that needs to be through different methods. At The Neem Tree, we have had a good balance between digital and non-digital marketing. For example, we have had stalls at events and fairs, attended networking events, and set up sponsorships, as well as hired digital PR agencies and staff to help build the website.

KEY INGREDIENTS

Overall, running a business while juggling getting stuck in with dentistry can be extremely complex, challenging and hard work. But having the right team around you, working on your communication, and investing resourcing and money into the things you need can be the key ingredients to set you up for long-term success.

Top tips

- Invest in time and resources. Dedicate time to your practice's growth and enlist help from professionals to manage aspects like finances and marketing
- Recruit the right team. Clearly define the roles and skills needed to achieve your business goals. Prioritise finding team members with both technical expertise and excellent interpersonal skills to ensure patient satisfaction and loyalty
- Prioritise employee wellbeing. Foster a respectful and supportive work environment. Regularly check in with staff, recognise their contributions, and provide perks or emotional support to maintain morale and retain a solid team
- Effective communication. Maintain open and regular communication with your team through structured meetings. Ensure everyone is aligned with business goals and has access to support for personal or professional challenges
- Develop a marketing strategy. Use a mix of digital and traditional marketing strategies to promote your business.

Seeing is believing

How **Pearl AI** helped enhance patient trust and boost treatment at Bush Dental

Bush Dental, a bustling multidisciplinary practice in West London, uses cutting-edge technology to deliver exceptional patient care. When Dr. Vishan Patel first encountered Pearl AI Second Opinion – a diagnostic AI tool that enhances X-ray analysis – he recognised its potential to elevate both clinical accuracy and patient communication.

Through the use of Pearl AI, Dr. Vishan has enhanced diagnostic precision, strengthened patient trust, and ultimately, increased treatment acceptance and revenue for the practice.



Results

14%

increase in the number of patients with a filling

22%

increase in total fillings completed

1,436%

increase in sales of fluoride mouthwash

CHALLENGE

Dr. Vishan Patel, a dentist at Bush Dental, needed to facilitate patient education and improve treatment acceptance by making diagnoses more accessible and transparent.

APPROACH

The practice integrated Pearl AI Second Opinion software to simplify patient communication, enabling patients to "see" their diagnosis more clearly and understand their treatment options with confidence.

RESULTS

Between March and August 2024, Bush Dental observed improved treatment acceptance driving a 14% increase in the number of patients completing one or more fillings, and a 22% increase in total fillings completed.

HOW PEARL AI BUILDS TRUST THROUGH PATIENT EDUCATION

Pearl AI Second Opinion allowed Dr. Vishan to streamline patient communication by transforming traditional greyscale X-rays into colour-coded visuals that are easy for patients to interpret.

Improved diagnostics

Second Opinion's precise detection of caries and radiolucencies enabled Dr. Vishan and his team to diagnose confidently. In one case, Pearl AI caught an otherwise undetected carious lesion on a lower right molar that allowed Dr. Vishan to perform a minimally invasive treatment, sparing the patient from more extensive future care.



A picture worth a thousand words

Pearl AI transformed standard X-rays into colourful presentation aids. Pearl AI Second Opinion backed up Dr. Vishan's diagnosis, streamlining communication and building patient trust. He spent less time trying to translate greyscale radiographs and more time educating patients about their treatment needs.

Empowered patients accept treatment

This transparency fostered clarity and confidence among Dr. Vishan's patients, who became more engaged and proactive in their treatment decisions. Working with Second Opinion significantly improved acceptance rates, as patients are more likely to proceed with recommended treatments when they can visually verify and understand the need.

For further details, visit www.hellopearl.com.

Patient education: tips and tricks

Barry Oulton discusses communicating new procedures and their benefits with patients

Guided biofilm therapy (GBT) has emerged as an innovative, evidence-based approach to preventive care that can improve patient outcomes.

As dental professionals, our role extends beyond providing treatments; we must also educate patients on how preventive care contributes to their overall health and why certain procedures are worth investing in.

Explaining GBT effectively can make patients feel informed and assured, creating a more engaged patient base.

A GAME CHANGER

GBT is a method for managing dental biofilm. Left untreated, biofilm contributes to issues like gingivitis, periodontitis and tooth decay. Traditional cleanings often focus on removing plaque and tartar build up, but they can be challenging on a microscopic level, leaving biofilm intact in difficult-to-reach areas. GBT targets and eradicates biofilm more thoroughly through an eight-step process that combines plaque detection, air polishing, and minimally invasive cleaning techniques.

Unlike conventional cleaning methods, GBT uses a disclosing agent to make biofilm visible. This approach not only enhances thoroughness but also engages patients in their care. By removing biofilm effectively, GBT reduces the risk of future dental issues, supporting better long-term health and minimising the need for more invasive treatments later on.



Barry Oulton

Barry is a practising dentist and the founder of The Confident Dentist. He is a qualified coach and experienced trainer, certified in hypnotherapy and a master practitioner in neuro-linguistic programming (NLP).

INTRODUCTION STRATEGIES

Introducing a new treatment to patients requires careful communication, especially if it comes with additional costs. Here are some ways to present GBT to help patients see the value.

Highlight GBT as a preventive investment, not an upsell

Begin by framing GBT as part of a holistic approach to preventive care rather than just an 'additional service'. Explain that GBT aligns with current best practices in dentistry, aimed at protecting their long-term oral health.

You might say: 'GBT is designed to give you the most thorough cleaning possible, with the goal of preventing problems before they start. It's an investment in your future health, helping you avoid potentially costly and uncomfortable treatments in the future.'

Explain the science in simple terms

Use clear, jargon-free explanations to describe GBT's process. For example, you could say: 'With GBT, we use a special solution that makes biofilm visible. This allows us to clean more accurately, targeting the spots that contribute most to gum disease and tooth decay. It's a thorough, gentle approach that takes preventive care to the next level.'

Emphasise that the treatment is comfortable and minimally invasive.

Leverage real-life analogies

Comparisons can help make new concepts relatable. For instance, you could compare GBT to 'detailing a car', explaining that while traditional cleaning methods are effective, GBT provides a 'deep clean'. You could also describe the disclosing solution as 'shining a light' on areas that need extra attention.

Why GBT is an effective preventive measure

Here are a few key points to emphasise the effectiveness of GBT:

- **Enhanced plaque and biofilm detection:** the disclosing solution reveals plaque and biofilm buildup that might be missed with the naked eye. This precise targeting allows for a more thorough cleaning, reducing risks of decay and gum disease
- **Minimally invasive yet comprehensive:** GBT's air polishing is a gentle, minimally invasive procedure that can be more comfortable than traditional scaling. It's suitable for children, patients with sensitive teeth or implants, elderly patients, or those who may find traditional methods uncomfortable
- **Promotes self-care and patient accountability:** GBT includes a patient education component, as the disclosing agent allows patients to see exactly where biofilm exists on their teeth. This encourages patients to improve their daily oral hygiene habits, creating a partnership in their care journey
- **Long-term preventive value:** By effectively managing biofilm, GBT reduces the risk of gum disease, cavities, and other dental issues that may require more complex treatments. For patients, this translates to fewer costly or invasive procedures down the line and a reduced risk of discomfort or disruption to their lives.

Discuss financial value

When it comes to the additional cost of GBT, frame this as a preventive expense that can save them money over time. Highlight that by addressing biofilm early, they're investing in their health and potentially avoiding treatments like fillings, crowns, or periodontal therapy in the future.

You could say: 'GBT is a more advanced approach to cleaning that reduces the likelihood of issues later on. While it's a bit more of an investment now, it can prevent the need for more costly treatments later.'

EDUCATING PATIENTS

Using educational tools can make GBT easier to understand and helps patients retain information.

Visual aids: infographics and videos

Provide patients with printed or digital infographics that illustrate the GBT process. Simple, step-by-step visuals can clarify what they can expect. Consider videos that introduce GBT, showing before and after images of teeth with biofilm versus after GBT treatment.

Disclosing solution demos

If feasible, offer to demonstrate the disclosing solution to interested patients. Show them how the solution highlights biofilm, providing a clear visual of what you're targeting with GBT. This first-hand experience can be a powerful way to show how the treatment works. After showing biofilm build-up, discuss how regular GBT treatments can help them avoid such accumulation in the future, tying back to their health.

Patient testimonials and case studies

Share positive experiences from other GBT patients. If possible, present anonymised case studies showing how patients with recurrent gum issues, for example, saw improvement after incorporating GBT into their care. Testimonials can be shared in the form of short quotes or video snippets, and they can add credibility to the benefits you're describing.

Follow-up resources for patients

Send patients home with resources that reinforce what they learned during their visit. A brochure or follow-up email with a link to a GBT video or article can serve as a reminder of the benefits and maintain the conversation beyond the clinic.

Provide educational content on your website or social media channels. Patients researching GBT in their own time will have access to information that reflects the quality of care and the innovative approach your practice offers.

MORE THAN JUST CLEANING

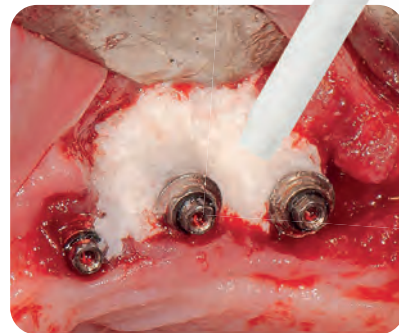
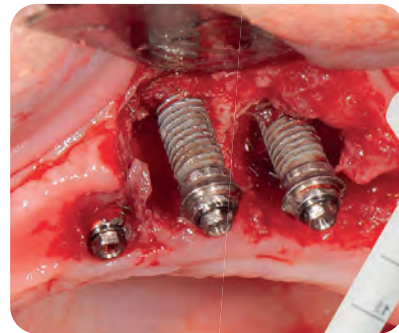
Guided biofilm therapy is more than just a new cleaning technique – it's a comprehensive, patient-centred approach to oral health. By emphasising its preventive benefits and using relatable, accessible language, you can help patients understand the value of GBT.

With clear explanations and the support of visual aids, patients are more likely to appreciate the importance of this advanced treatment.

Ultimately, patient education around GBT fosters trust, strengthens the provider-patient relationship, and aligns with our shared goal of lasting oral health.



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Effective communication

Toyin Akala discusses the power of non-verbal cues and emotional awareness

Effective communication is the cornerstone of quality oral healthcare, directly influencing patient experience and treatment outcomes. In the fast-paced environment of a dental practice, opportunities to connect with patients can often be overlooked. When the focus shifts to diagnosing and treating problems rather than understanding patients as individuals, misunderstandings and increased anxiety may arise. To address these issues, clinicians must pay closer attention to subtle, often non-verbal cues and details.

Research by Simpson and colleagues (1991), cited in Matthews et al (1987), highlights that active listening to patients' concerns is a key quality that patients value in their clinician. Given the intimate nature of oral healthcare – where patients must trust their clinician while in a vulnerable position – effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal, should never be underestimated.

By honing these communication skills, dental professionals can foster positive clinician-patient relationships and significantly enhance the overall patient experience.



Toyin Akala

Toyin has been immersed in the field of dentistry for more than 21 years. In 2004, she participated in the Sure Start Programme and earned a foundation level certificate in oral health promotion. Toyin qualified as a dental nurse in 2005 and advanced to become a dental sedation nurse. In 2010, she earned a qualification as an oral health practitioner, and in 2016, completed her training as a dental therapist at King's College London.



UNDERSTANDING NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN A DENTAL SETTING

Non-verbal communication encompasses all the messages sent without words and plays a crucial role in how information is conveyed and received in dental settings. This form of communication includes elements such as facial expressions, gestures, body posture, tone of voice, eye contact, physical proximity, and touch. Each of these components can significantly influence the patient experience and the overall effectiveness of communication in a clinical environment.

In a dental setting, patients often arrive anxious or uncertain, and non-verbal cues can speak louder than words. A reassuring smile, gentle tone, or open posture can quickly put a patient at ease.

Similarly, non-verbal signals like clenched fists or tense posture may reveal discomfort, guiding the clinician to adjust their approach for the patient's comfort.

THE IMPORTANCE OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION

Research by Albert Mehrabian (1971) highlighted the significance of non-verbal cues in communication. His findings indicate that a substantial portion of interpersonal communication is non-verbal, with only 7% attributed to verbal content.

Specifically, his model suggests that 93% of communication is non-verbal, composed of 38% vocal elements (including tone, pitch, and volume) and 55% body language.

In dental care, this research is particularly relevant. The way something is communicated often matters more than the words themselves.

For example, when explaining a procedure, the clinician can actively use facial expressions, eye contact, and tone of voice to create a calming environment, helping the patient feel secure. Conversely, a hurried or distracted tone – even if the words are reassuring – may increase a patient's anxiety. Body language,

such as keeping an open posture and ensuring appropriate physical proximity, can communicate attentiveness and empathy.

THE ROLE OF EMOTIONAL AWARENESS

Non-verbal communication is not just about sending cues, it also involves interpreting the patient's emotional state and reading their non-verbal signals.

Roter and colleagues (2006) emphasise that the emotional context of care is closely related to non-verbal communication. Sending and receiving non-verbal messages, combined with emotional awareness, is critical for providing high-quality care.

Patients may not always articulate their anxieties, fears, or concerns, but their body language and facial expressions often reveal their emotional state.

Emotional awareness sharpens a clinician's ability to read these cues, ensuring that care is tailored not only to the physical problem but also to the emotional needs of the patient.

For example, a patient fidgeting, gripping the armrest, or avoiding eye contact may indicate nervousness or discomfort. Dental professionals must recognise these signs and adjust their approach, whether by offering reassurance, explaining procedures further, or providing a moment of comfort. In some cases, treatment may need to be postponed until the patient is in a better emotional state.

ENHANCING PATIENT TRUST THROUGH EMPATHY

When a clinician can read and respond to a patient's emotional state, it reassures the patient that they are in safe, empathetic hands. This emotional connection is vital for building long-term trust, which in turn increases the likelihood that patients will follow through with their treatment and return for future visits.

A patient who feels understood on an emotional level is more inclined to develop loyalty to the practice, knowing that their concerns are recognised and addressed.

This trust is not only critical for immediate patient satisfaction but also for treatment outcomes. A

Practical applications in dental care

Each aspect of non-verbal communication serves a different purpose within the clinical environment:

- **Facial expressions:** a warm smile can create an inviting atmosphere and alleviate tension, while a concerned or furrowed brow signals attentiveness to the patient's needs. Dental professionals should be mindful of how their expressions might be interpreted, ensuring they are calm and reassuring even during complex procedures
- **Eye contact:** maintaining steady eye contact shows engagement, builds trust, and reassures the patient that their concerns are being taken seriously. Avoiding eye contact or shifting focus too quickly may give the impression of disinterest or lack of confidence
- **Tone of voice:** a soft, calm voice can reduce patient anxiety, while an upbeat and positive tone can make routine visits feel more pleasant. In contrast, a rushed or monotonous voice may convey stress, disinterest, or lack of empathy, causing patients to feel uneasy
- **Body language:** open, relaxed body language communicates comfort and confidence. Standing with crossed arms, sitting rigidly, or leaning too far away can create a psychological barrier between the clinician and the patient. Instead, leaning slightly forward, with arms relaxed, signals that the clinician is engaged and approachable
- **Gestures:** subtle hand gestures, like nodding when listening, can affirm that the clinician understands the patient's concerns. On the other hand, abrupt or excessive gestures may signal impatience or frustration, which can heighten a patient's nervousness
- **Space/proximity:** maintaining an appropriate physical distance is key in creating a comfortable environment. Standing too far may feel distant and disengaged, while being too close can invade personal space and increase anxiety. Adjusting proximity based on the patient's comfort level – whether they need more space or reassuring closeness – is essential for effective care
- **Touch:** gentle, reassuring touch, such as a light hand on the shoulder or arm, can provide comfort and reduce fear, particularly in nervous patients. However, clinicians must remain mindful of personal boundaries and preferences, adjusting to the patient's cultural background and comfort level with physical contact
- **Pacing and timing:** the speed at which a dental professional moves or speaks can convey a lot. Rushing through explanations or procedures can leave patients feeling anxious or overwhelmed, while a more measured pace fosters a sense of calm and control. This approach gives patients the time to absorb the information, ask questions, and gain a deeper understanding, ultimately leading to informed consent
- **Active listening cues:** Nods, brief verbal affirmations (like 'I understand'), and other subtle gestures can signal active listening. These cues reassure the patient that their concerns are being heard and taken seriously.

Incorporating awareness of these non-verbal elements into patient interactions can not only make appointments more comfortable but also foster a stronger patient-clinician relationship. When patients feel that their health provider is attuned to their emotional and physical cues, they are more likely to communicate openly, comply with treatment plans, and trust the overall care provided.

patient who feels at ease is more likely to communicate openly about their symptoms and concerns, leading to more accurate diagnoses and effective treatment planning.

Additionally, reducing patient anxiety can result in smoother procedures and quicker recovery times, as the body is less likely to respond with stress-induced complications.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY

Non-verbal communication is also deeply influenced by cultural factors. What is considered appropriate body language, eye contact, or personal space can vary across cultures.

In some cultures, direct eye contact is seen as a sign of confidence and honesty, while in others, it may be perceived as disrespectful or confrontational. Similarly, the use of physical touch may be more accepted in certain cultures and seen as intrusive in others.

Dental professionals need to be culturally competent and sensitive to these differences. Understanding and respecting cultural variations in non-verbal communication can

help avoid misunderstandings and ensure that patients from diverse backgrounds feel respected and understood.

TRAINING FOR EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

While some dental professionals may naturally excel at reading non-verbal cues, emotional intelligence (EI) can be developed and refined through training. Investing in EI training equips dental teams with the skills to better recognise and respond to the emotional signals patients display.

Courses focused on EI can teach dental teams how to pick up on subtle signs of discomfort, anxiety, or fear, and how to respond in ways that calm and reassure the patient.

This training can also help clinicians manage their own emotions, reducing the likelihood of stress or frustration being unintentionally conveyed to the patient. By cultivating emotional intelligence, dental professionals can create an environment where communication is fluid, patients feel understood, and both verbal and

non-verbal exchanges lead to more positive treatment experiences.

CONCLUSION

Effective communication in dentistry transcends mere talking and listening; it requires an active interpretation of non-verbal cues and emotional signals to foster a deeper understanding between clinicians and patients.

Dental professionals must not assume that all patients communicate or understand in the same way; each interaction presents a unique opportunity to assess and address individual needs.

By cultivating emotional awareness, practicing cultural sensitivity, and mastering the subtleties of body language, clinicians can create a more compassionate, patient-centred environment. This not only enhances patient satisfaction but also significantly improves treatment outcomes.

Ultimately, embracing the power of non-verbal communication will elevate the quality of care in dentistry, leading to stronger, more trusting relationships with patients.



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In pursuit of excellence

Private Dentistry Awards 2024 winner **Ahmad Nounu** shares his personal journey in dentistry, highlighting his growth, challenges, and dedication to excellence

In the world of modern dentistry, few professionals manage to blend clinical expertise with visionary entrepreneurship as successfully as Dr Ahmad Nounu. A cosmetic dentist by trade, Dr Nounu's journey has been marked by determination, creativity and a relentless pursuit of excellence, traits that have not only shaped his career but have also had a profound impact on the people around him.

From overcoming the early challenges of taking over a struggling dental practice to becoming a prominent figure in cosmetic dentistry, Dr Nounu's story is a testament to perseverance, self-growth, and passion for his craft.

Here, he shares personal insights into the path that led him to where he is today and the principles that continue to drive him forward.

Q Can you tell us about your background and what initially drew you to dentistry?

A I graduated from Bristol Dental Hospital in 2008. Science has always been a strong interest of mine, but I've also had some artistic flair. Dentistry appealed to me because it naturally blended those two passions.

I had to choose between medicine and dentistry, and I thought dentistry might give me more creativity and flexibility.

When I joined the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (BACD), my perspective on dentistry truly broadened. I started to see what was possible regarding cosmetic and aesthetic work.



Dentistry became not just a job but a craft – one where I could constantly refine my skills while making a tangible difference in people's lives.

Q You took over Black Swan Dental Spa at a young age. What inspired you to take such a bold step?

A Taking over Black Swan was definitely a daunting decision. I was just 27 years old, and the practice was failing financially. The previous owner, Steve Davis, had suffered a horse-riding accident and could not continue, so he offered me the opportunity to take over.

I didn't have the financial resources or the business experience then, but I could see the potential in the practice.

It was a huge learning curve for me, both personally and professionally. But I've always been driven by a vision of creating something better. It wasn't just about running a successful practice – it was about turning a struggling business into a thriving space where I could offer high-quality, innovative dental care.

Q What role did mentorship play in your early career, and who were your biggest influences?

A Mentorship has been crucial throughout my journey. Early on, I had the chance to work with incredible mentors who shaped my career.

Neil Gerrard played a massive role in my development when I was shadowing him in Bristol. He exposed me to high-end cosmetic dentistry, which opened my eyes to what was possible.

In terms of business mentorship, Alun Rees significantly influenced my early days of practice ownership. He helped me understand the business side, which was entirely new.

On the clinical side, Chris Orr's course helped deepen my interest in aesthetic and restorative dentistry.

Later, my training with Frank Spear in Arizona was a turning point for my skills in advanced restorative work.

These mentors didn't just teach me technical skills but helped shape my overall vision of what I wanted to achieve in dentistry.



Black Swan Dental Spa: Practice of the Year 2024

How did it feel to win Practice of the Year at the 2024 Private Dentistry Awards?

It was such a special moment to win the overall Practice of the Year award and to have my team present was a priceless experience. It's an experience we will all cherish for the rest of our lives, as it's ultimately a team award and cements all the hard work that's been done to get to this stage after all these years.

You also won Digital Practice South and Practice of the Year South West and Wales – where will you display the trophies?

We've now thankfully won a few trophies over the last few years and have them all displayed in our reception area but the overall Practice of the Year one takes centre stage in our reception backdrop.

Will you be entering the awards again?

We will certainly enter again! It will drive us to continue raising our standards ever more over the coming years, as the competition will no doubt get stronger every year but we will cherish the challenge again.

Q What have been the biggest challenges in your career, and how have you overcome them?

A The challenges have been constant, but they've also been incredibly educational. One of the biggest challenges, especially early on, was accepting that you can't control everything.

With a growing practice, managing staff and balancing clinical work with the business side was initially overwhelming. There were moments where I felt I was in over my head; the turning point was realising that I didn't need to do everything myself. I learned to delegate and trust my team.

On the clinical side, the quest for perfection can sometimes feel like a never-ending journey. I've always wanted to push myself to be better and

provide the best possible care for my patients, but the more you learn, the more you realise how much there is still left to learn.

It's a constant process of self-improvement, and I've embraced that. It was one of the main reasons I created the PDM (Professional Dental Mentoring) course: to help guide younger dentists through this learning curve and give them the support and knowledge they need to succeed.

Another challenge was making the financial decisions required to keep the practice afloat in its early days. Managing cash flow while growing the business was tough, but I approached it one step at a time.

Taking risks, making sacrifices and not being afraid to fail have been critical lessons for me.



Q What drives your passion for dentistry, and how do you continue to stay motivated after more than a decade in the profession?

A The combination of artistry and science keeps me motivated. Dentistry allows me to express my creativity while engaging with the science of making things work effectively for patients. However, seeing the impact we can have on someone's confidence and wellbeing is most fulfilling.

In many ways, it feels like I'm still learning and evolving. Each case presents a new challenge, and I enjoy that aspect of continuous improvement.

I've also found motivation in mentoring younger dentists and sharing my knowledge. Passing on my knowledge and seeing the next generation of dentists excel drives me forward.

Q What advice would you give to young dentists starting out in their careers?

A I suggest you take your time and focus on the fundamentals.

Too often, young dentists want to rush into advanced treatments like dental implants or cosmetic work without mastering the basics. But the reality is that you will struggle when things don't go as planned if you don't have a solid foundation.

Learn how to diagnose correctly, get patients out of pain, and understand

core dentistry before you move on to the more complex treatments.

Also, don't fear making mistakes – they're part of the learning process.

Dentistry is a long-term career; the more patient you are with your development, the better you'll be in the long run.

Q How has technology impacted the way you practise dentistry?

A Technology has been amazing, to be completely honest, and it's really helping us out significantly, especially if we understand how to use it well. But there are two sides to this.

On the one hand, it's a fantastic tool that makes our lives significantly easier – everything from digital scanners to 3D imaging allows us to work more efficiently and provide more precise treatment planning.

However, what could be improved is the fundamental understanding of why things work the way they do. Some aspects of basic dental knowledge are lost because of over-reliance on technology.

For me, technology must be a tool to enhance our skills rather than a crutch that replaces our clinical understanding.

TAKING RISKS, MAKING SACRIFICES AND NOT BEING AFRAID TO FAIL HAVE BEEN CRITICAL LESSONS FOR ME

If things don't go as planned, you must know how to troubleshoot without relying solely on tech.

So, while it's an incredible asset, it should never replace our

foundational knowledge as dentists.

Q What does the future hold for you?

A I want to continue pushing the boundaries of what's possible in private dentistry. I see myself playing a more active role in mentoring and educating the next generation of dentists.

There's a lot of potential in private dentistry that we haven't fully tapped into yet, and I want to be part of driving that change.

I'm still committed to learning as much as possible regarding my personal growth.

Dentistry is constantly evolving, and there's always something new to explore. It's about staying curious, humble, and challenging myself.

For more information about Black Scan Dental Spa, visit blacksdentalspa.co.uk, and visit privatedentalmentor.co.uk to discover more about Private Dental Mentor.

Die Zirkonzahn Schule – heroes of dental technology

Zirkonzahn's courses and schools for dental technicians and dentists in the heart of the Italian Alps

'Die Zirkonzahn Schule' (the Zirkonzahn School) is a training programme that combines dental technical teaching with a school of life and culture. The Zirkonzahn School offers both courses and schools for all walks of life: it aims to support both young and expert dental technicians in making personal and professional growth, by means of a diligent and complete education which focuses on craftsmanship techniques and on digital technology. The educational programme has been conceived thoroughly by the creative mind of Enrico Steger, MDT, pioneer of dental technology and founder of the worldwide, dental technical company Zirkonzahn (South Tyrol, Italy). According to Steger's belief that "learning means repeating", excellent results only arise from an ongoing and self-motivated pursuit of improvements as well as from a constant exercise.

All Zirkonzahn Schools take place in the meadows of the company's homeland, South Tyrol, embraced by the magnificent Alps, and all classes are held by expert dental technicians trained in-house. The six schools included in the programme have been conceived considering the specific and differentiated targets' needs. They last from five days to several months and, in some cases, they are run in an international ambiance.

MILITARY SCHOOL

The most traditional five-day training offered to the young, focused on the concept of discipline and for this reason, characterised by a military orientation: after getting up early, morning exercises and working tasks are performed following a strict and well-planned schedule with a diligent attitude. In the evening, there is still no time for rest: adventurous dental, technical and personal challenges still await the young participants!

RANGER SCHOOL

In a period of three to six months, enthusiastic, committed and ambitious young technicians can broaden their knowledge on digital workflow, aesthetic design and latest innovative dental solutions. But the Ranger School is not only homework and workshops: alongside the strict schedule, adventurous and cultural activities await the students, bringing the Rangers face to face with their own limits. Hence, 'Climb the mountain' is the Ranger School's motto!

FOREST SCHOOL

Located in a rustic farmhouse, the Forest School welcomes experienced dental technicians for five days. In close contact with nature and tradition – without smartphones, radio or television – participants look after themselves, hike, experience the community and concentrate on prosthetics and digital workflow, putting into practice every content learnt.

SAFARI SCHOOL

A journey through our homeland and an immersion in the handicraft work: this is what awaits the experienced dental technicians for five days. In a spartan and extravagant accommodation, they will engage in morning sports, different group activities and innovative patient diagnostic approaches as well as layering techniques.

MOUNTAIN MONASTERY

The mystical atmosphere of the Mountain Monastery unlocks people's hidden talents, bringing out their best. In the contemplative silence, thoughts are the only distraction granted, providing mental access to unusual solutions and bringing to light what a



Never stop learning! Master innovative techniques and new technologies: attend our Schools in the Aurina Valley (Italy) or take part in one of the courses scheduled in our Education Centers in South Tyrol and worldwide

person really wants. During seven days of training, the seven participants not only refine professional skills, but also deal with the psychological factors that lead people to success.

HELDENCAMPUS

A special training conceived and tailor-made for the excellences of dental technology. Participants can take part in the Heldencampus only upon personal invitation by Mr Enrico Steger.

Designed as a minimal place to maintain a high level of concentration, this five-day training is mostly dedicated to the concept of refinement: precision, attention to details, aesthetic appearance, cleanliness, work presentation and packaging, tool maintenance and workflow are the main topics discussed during the course.

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Are you brave enough? To discover all challenging educational opportunities of the Zirkonzahn School, scan the QR code.



Tackling gender bias: a personal manifesto

Sarika Shah on the need to empower women to lead and succeed

In the October issue of *Private Dentistry*, we spoke to Sarika Shah about opening Platinum Dental Care in London's Canary Wharf. As a female practice owner, she often reflects on the highs, hurdles, and precarious balance needed to run a growing business while embracing motherhood. Her journey has profoundly shaped her leadership style and outlook.

Running a dental practice comes with unique pressures for all, but for women, societal expectations and personal responsibilities add an extra layer. Sarika believes in open dialogue at home and in the workplace and encourages finding creative solutions rather than closing doors. Here, she shares her invaluable insights.

Q Fewer than one in 10 new dental practices were started by women in 2022. What do you believe are the primary challenges keeping women away from practice ownership?

A Developing the clinical expertise and financial stability needed to own a dental practice typically takes five to seven years after graduation. By that time, many women may have already started families. Maternity leave and the potential for working part-time can further prolong the path to practice ownership due to skill gaps.

Being a practice principal while maintaining clinical duties demands significant time, dedication and hard work. This commitment can be particularly challenging for women who, by choice or necessity, take on primary caregiving roles for their children and families, often discouraging them.



There are many more skills outside of the clinical realm of dentistry needed to run a dental practice, and most of them need to be taught to us as educational institutes focus more on clinical skills.

Few postgraduate courses exist for setting up dental practices; even fewer, if any, are run by female practice owners. This becomes a barrier as some challenges women face in running a dental practice differ from those men encounter. There needs to be more ongoing support for women once they have started their journey to practice ownership.

Owning a dental practice requires an entrepreneurial and growth mindset. Generally, due to patriarchal norms within our environment, many women have been conditioned to believe their role is to serve. Through this, there has been a lack of knowledge and access

to resources and networks.

It has only been within the last 50 years that the channels to these have opened up for women. Although we are already seeing significant progress and growth changes for women in their careers and personal lives, it will take some time for some of these conditioned belief systems and mindsets to change for both men and women to give all women the freedom to truly thrive.

Q According to a recent study, the prevalence of women in leadership positions in dentistry is low. What systemic barriers contribute to this gender disparity in leadership roles?

A Societal norms, biases and cultural expectations often perpetuate gender stereotypes, creating systemic hurdles for women aspiring to leadership roles.

Organisational structures and practices, including lack of mentorship opportunities, gender bias in hiring and promotion and workplace discrimination, further exacerbate these barriers.

Q Can you share any personal experiences where you faced barriers or challenges while advancing your career?

A Early in my career, before owning my practice, I encountered numerous challenges – one of the most significant being pay disparity. While working at an NHS practice, despite consistently completing the highest number of UDAs, working the longest hours, and having the fewest reworks or complaints, I was paid less per UDA than my male colleagues.



I've also noticed that many of the women I've worked with often face a lack of inclusivity during discussions about new practice initiatives.

I've encountered egoistic behaviour from more experienced clinicians, who, instead of offering support, made me feel inferior in terms of knowledge, strength, and resilience compared to my male colleagues.

At one point, this judgement undermined my confidence and highlighted a lack of support and mentorship from more experienced female colleagues.

Q A recent scoping review suggests recommendations for decreasing gender disparities in dentistry. What specific strategies do you think would be most effective in achieving gender parity in leadership positions?

A Dismantling the structural biases and organisational barriers that impede women's growth in dentistry remains vital. This thinking is critical not only for attaining gender equity but also for developing introspective, resilient female leaders who are prepared to face the challenges of modern-day dentistry.

We must move from transactional leadership to embracing inclusive and transformational leadership. This is not

just about opening doors for women; it's about changing what leadership looks like within the industry.

Inclusive leadership demands not only a seat at the table for everyone but also a voice in the decisions that shape our future. It's about recognising each individual's strengths, values and contributions and leveraging those differences to drive inspiration, innovation, growth, and support.

Q What role do mentorship and networking play in helping women overcome barriers, and how have these elements influenced your career?

A Networking and mentorship can help women in the workplace by providing guidance, support, and opportunities for growth. Although I have had very few mentors in my career, they have been paramount to my success and growth by helping me develop my clinical and business skills and knowledge and providing me with psychosocial support.

The absence of female mentorship in my journey has driven me to change this dynamic. I firmly believe that women benefit significantly from the guidance and support of experienced mentors. These mentors serve as role models and help women develop self-awareness and overcome limiting beliefs.

Networking also plays a crucial role, enabling women to share ideas and best practices and build their brand and reputation. While I feel fortunate to be part of a motivating network of professional women, I am passionate about ensuring that more women can access and create similar support systems.

Q Future research is suggested to focus on a comparative analysis of barriers to leadership. What specific areas do you think this research should prioritise to provide a better understanding of the challenges women face in dentistry?

A We need more specific statistics on gender biases, pay gaps and other barriers/challenges women in dentistry face based on age, type of practice, role and areas of clinical interest, as this directly affects their leadership pathway.

We must also explore and collect data on what prevents women from becoming business owners. With this information, we can build specific, practical strategies.

Q What does self-leadership mean for you?

A Self-leadership is the fundamental platform for any leadership, and this has to start from within.

In our profession, we are all leaders in some aspects, as most of us work with a team to provide optimal patient-centred care and service. To achieve this, we must first master our leadership, which means controlling our thoughts, emotions, mindset, and actions and being accountable. This makes us powerful communicators and decision-makers and helps us build strong, trustworthy relationships.

Once we become strong self-leaders, we can confidently achieve our goals and transition into more external leadership roles.

Q Flourish as a Female is a course on self-leadership for women in the industry. Participants can also receive one to one mentoring or coaching. This initiative was borne out of your personal experiences. Can you tell us more?

A Mastering self-leadership has entirely transformed my life professionally and personally by giving me the skills and mindset I need to grow and thrive without always needing the support of others.

I wanted to share this with other women in dentistry. So, I created Flourish as a Female, a two-day in-person course for women in dentistry on leadership and development. It aims to teach the fundamental principles of self-leadership and share strategies and tips around taking self-accountability and responsibility to become influential decision-makers.

Overall, this will empower women to overcome challenges, confidently stride towards success and fulfilment, and inspire other women to achieve the same.

For more details, visit www.flourishasafemale.com.



Celebrating 10 years of success

Private Dentistry shares some of the highlights of **The Orthodontic Clinic's** 10-year anniversary party

This year marks the 10th anniversary of The Orthodontic Clinic, with directors Dr Lisa Currie and Ivin Tan at the helm.

To commemorate this special occasion and to celebrate the past 10 years, the clinic held a glittering party on 28 September 2024 at The Chester Hotel in Aberdeen, Scotland.

Those attending the event included Lisa and Ivin's team, friends, family and close colleagues who have helped and supported the company throughout its journey to success.

Guests included those who have been instrumental from the beginning in helping Lisa and Ivin buy the business and grow it into the multi-award-winning clinic it is today.

PRETTY IN PINK

It was a pink themed party, with all guests donning pink in some way. The stunning décor was in all hues of pink, with beautiful blooms of flowers, balloon displays and custom-designed Instagram wall and welcome signs.

There was a 360-degree photo booth to help capture memories from



the night. A specially designed sign was also on display for guests to sign as a memento and fond keepsake from the party.

Throughout the evening, a film montage played on a big screen with many testimonials and messages of congratulations from staff, colleagues, family and friends. The footage also showcased the fabulous highlights and experiences the clinic has had over the past 10 years.

SHOUT OUTS

Lisa and Ivin gave special mention to their team, without whom the achievements of the clinic would not have been possible.

During the speeches, heartfelt thanks were given to the legal and accounting teams of Ledingham Chalmers and Johnston Carmichael,

who were instrumental in the process of Lisa and Ivin purchasing the clinic in 2014; to family and friends for their unwavering support along the way; to Direct Surgeries for building the new clinic and making the plans on paper a reality; to those who make the clinic bright and unique, including James Clark Decorators and MCL Painting and Decorating, as well as signmakers, Rood Signs; to PCL group for its IT support; to Alba Cleaning, for keeping the clinic pristine and glistening from day to day.

Thanks also went out to local dental colleagues for the strong relationships held with them and their kind referrals as well as to Aberdeen Dental Hospital for its support.

A live band entertained the crowd who danced into the early hours. Zain Al-Masri, the son of one of the clinic's dental colleagues, Dr Assem Al-Masri,

knocked out a stellar performance of a song. Having undergone fixed appliance therapy with Lisa, Zain was also able to show off his lovely smile.

One of the most memorable parts of the evening was the presentation of a commemorative silver plaque from Adrian Watson, CEO of Aberdeen Inspired BID (Business Improvement District) to The Orthodontic Clinic to mark its 10 years in business with Lisa and Ivin as its owners. Lisa and Ivin were honoured to receive this acknowledgment from the city.

The event was a fantastic night that celebrated all the dedication, passion and hard work Lisa and Ivin and all their team put into the business. They can be very proud of all their accomplishments.

Congratulations and happy 10th anniversary, The Orthodontic Clinic!



Merry Christmas
and
Happy New Year

THE ORTHODONTIC CLINIC

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Hosted by Trycare in London on 10 May 2025, delegates will learn how using vestibular socket therapy (VST) enables reliable and optimised immediate implant placement in the absence of labial bone.



Delivered by Dr Abdelsalam Elaskary, founder of VST and a renowned international speaker, this one-day lecture and hands-on workshop focuses on the most recent and updated implant protocols, in particular VST, which allows treatment of fresh extraction sites with immediate placement that reliably delivers optimised outcomes. Special emphasis will be on managing and optimising regenerative outcomes in the aesthetic zone.

VST is an extensively scientifically validated surgical technique, enabling treatment of a wide range of sockets exhibiting complete labial plate loss. It allows immediate placement in severely defective sockets and sockets with active infection.

Thanks to minimised intraoperative surgical trauma with less complicated surgical intervention, it saves treatment time and minimises the number of interventions. This innovative surgical approach reduces post-extraction socket collapse and the need for long-term provisional restoration and provides predictable aesthetic outcomes.

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A genuine practice builder, Biomin F enables patients to enhance their smile and improve their oral health and comfort. The toothpaste is approved by the Oral Health Foundation for sensitivity relief and remineralisation.

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Miracle shade matching Trycare

Trycare Ltd is UK distributor of Tokuyama Dental's range of spherical composites including Estelite Sigma Quick.



Featuring Tokuyama's patented RAP monomer and aesthetic spherical filler technology, Estelite Sigma Quick delivers an extended working time in ambient light yet cures in only 10 seconds!

There is also less residual monomer and minimal after cure colour change for long-term aesthetic satisfaction.

In addition, Estelite Sigma Quick offers miracle shade matching! Because of its spherical filler particles, it offers inherent shade mimicking so that, in most cases, just one shade will blend perfectly with the natural teeth, leaving invisible margins and undetectable restorations. These spherical fillers also facilitate outstanding polishing and a lustre that lasts and lasts, allied to high wear resistance and very low abrasion of the opposing teeth.

Estelite Sigma Quick is ideally used in combination with Tokuyama's award-winning Universal Bond II, which can be used to bond all direct and indirect restorative materials, Garrison Sectional Matrix Systems and for the ultimate aesthetic finish Eve polish ers!

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Bond Apatite hands-on workshop

Augma

Augma is running a full-day bone cement hands-on workshop on Saturday 29 March 2025 at the Royal Leonardo London City hotel, Tower Bridge, London.

It will be presented by Dr Lucio Faria who has been a national and international speaker for Nobel Biocare since 2011, is a surgical master in regenerative implant dentistry and has undertaken extensive postgraduate studies in prosthodontics, bone and soft tissue grafting, and zygomatic implant surgery and rehabilitation.



Dr Faria will review four of the most common surgical protocols using Bond Apatite bone grafting cement, which sets immediately and is accompanied by minimally invasive surgical procedures that do not require a membrane.

Delegates will receive practical knowledge on how to perform socket grafting without flap reflection, lateral ridge augmentation and augmentation in the aesthetic zone.

The course includes a variety of resources, such as animated videos, recorded live surgery demonstrations and clinical videos. Evidence based data histology shows how following the surgical protocols leads to clinical success and complete bone regeneration for the patient.

The course fee is £195+VAT (including all course materials and refreshments), with an early bird price of £145+VAT before 31 January 2025.

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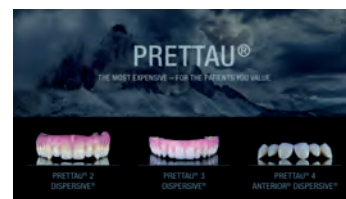
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- With the new Prettau 3 Dispersive zirconia, the concept of Gradual-Triplex-Technology was introduced. In addition to the colouring, also translucency and flexural strength levels change. In this way, while the incisally increasing translucency results in a highly translucent incisal edge, the cervically increasing flexural strength leads to an extremely high flexural strength at the tooth neck
- Prettau 4 Anterior and Prettau 4 Anterior Dispersive have been specially designed for the anterior region and are therefore characterised by a particularly high translucency. Both materials are suited for the posterior region. These two types of zirconia are suitable for the production of single crowns, inlays, onlays, veneers and three-unit bridges.

Zirkonzahn Shade Guides are composed of monolithic zirconia sample teeth in the shape of premolars, upper and lower incisors. They are available in Prettau 2 Dispersive, Prettau 3 Dispersive and Prettau 4 Anterior Dispersive zirconia.

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Brilliant Crios has natural aesthetics with 15 shades in three translucencies to blend in perfectly with natural teeth, making it the ideal choice for single tooth restorations in the anterior as well as posterior region. This includes all conventional indications such as inlays, onlays, crowns and veneers.

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Outdoor workers, from farmers to sailors to labourers, are exposed to large amounts of sunlight. With UV rays identified as a risk factor for oral cancer, it is important that practitioners can do as much as they can to help relevant patients lower the risk.

The Bevigilant Orafusion System from Vigilant Biosciences detects the two biomarkers associated with oral cancer and recommends whether to monitor the patient or investigate further – all in 15 minutes or less.

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The Planmeca Stories video series features Planmeca dentists explaining in their own words why they chose its equipment for their formidable surgeries. Whether it's the Ultra Low Dose feature on the CBCT units or the armchair feel of the knee break chairs, each dentist has their own reason for choosing Planmeca.

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IN THE HOT SEAT

This month, we get to know cosmetic dentist **Manrina Rhode** as she answers our quick-fire questions

Q When and where was your last meal out?

A It was last week. My partner and I went with another dentist and her husband to Hawksmoor in Knightsbridge. It's our go-to place whenever we are meeting friends or going for a celebratory night out. My partner loves a good steak, and it allows us to have a delicious meal and hit our protein goals!

Q Who would play you in the movie of your life?

A It would have to be Jennifer Lopez!

Q What's the best advice you've received?

A My mum always says: 'Be flexible and squeeze through tight situations.'

I think it is my mum's version of Bruce Lee's 'be like water' quote, but I quote her on this often and say it in my head.

Q What's your guilty pleasure?

A Salt and vinegar crisps. I love them and often crave them.

Q What was the last gift you gave/received?

A I gave my partner some cool beige On Running trainers for his birthday recently to match mine. I like to match with him.

Q Describe your perfect holiday...

A Beach, sun, nature, sea, fresh air, book, sleep, slow days with the occasional hike and lots of time to read.

Q What's your all-time favourite book/movie?

A My favourite movie is *Zoolander*, which was directed by Ben Stiller. And my book choice would be *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho.

Q What song is guaranteed to make you want to dance?

A Bollywood item numbers.

Q What keeps you awake at night?

A Making plans for the business. Planning every detail of a new plan (I have lots of new ideas) when I should be sleeping or while I'm sleeping! I sometimes lucid dream.

MY PARTNER LOVES A GOOD STEAK, AND IT ALLOWS US TO HAVE A DELICIOUS MEAL AND HIT OUR PROTEIN GOALS

Q How do you like to unwind?

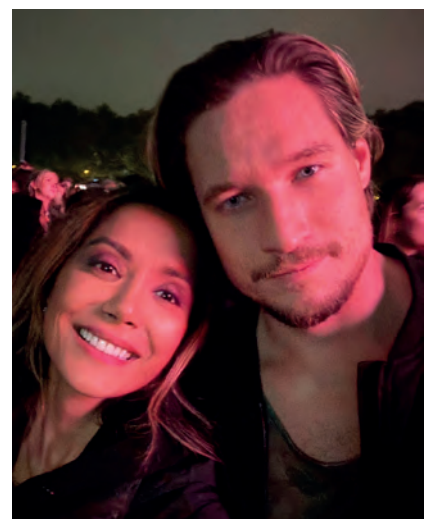
A Exercise – I love to exercise. Sometimes I watch trash reality dating show TV, as I love these also! I like to travel, too. Once I'm out of London, I'm out of work mode.

Q If you won the lottery, what would you do with the money?

A I want to do an advertising campaign taking over south Kensington or Knightsbridge tube station, promoting DRMR. I always said I would do this if I won the lottery.

Q What was the last photo you took on your phone?

A My partner and I at the Battersea Park fireworks in November. I only took one photo on the night, this was it.



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