

STUDENTS



DentaltownUK Honorary Associate Editor Kishan Sheth

**Colleagues and friends:
I was deeply and truly honoured
when I was appointed as the
honorary associate editor for
DentaltownUK's student section.**

The Dentaltown community has empowered dentists around the world and provided a beneficial learning tool for students, so I was excited to hear that it was expanding to the UK.

I hope that I'll fulfill the expectations of my peers and ensure the student section of the magazine includes a wealth of material to read and learn from. Together and united, students have a voice and a method in which we can share our thoughts and ideas about the profession with senior colleagues.

The primary goal of the student section is to empower undergraduate dental students to write about topics they're passionate about and to share their experiences with fellow dental students in the UK. Whatever empowers the profession and begins discussion should be shared for everyone's benefit, and I especially encourage the discussion of ideas that will help us raise our standards and become more effective providers.

This edition of *DentaltownUK* is packed with insightful content from students and professionally qualified colleagues. Here's a quick look at some of the pieces you'll read over the next few pages:

- A day in the life of Avijit Banerjee, head of minimally invasive and conservative dentistry at King's College London. Banerjee, one of my mentors, has supported me with extracurricular ventures and public speaking opportunities so it's a great pleasure and honour having him feature in this month's edition.
- A personal essay by Yihan Miao, discussing his life as a fourth-year dental student at King's College London.
- Advice about mastering dental core training and dental foundation training.
- Information about understanding and effectively reducing and managing stress and burnout.

I'd like to congratulate the authors of these articles for their insightful writeups. I hope you enjoy this edition of *DentaltownUK*, and I'm confident that it will continue to engage dental professionals and students all throughout the country—and indeed, the world!

DCT Is Coming: Embracing the

Dental foundation training (DFT) can be a challenging time for a lot of young dentists. Like most things in any career, you take from it as much as you put in. During this period, newly qualified dentists have many opportunities to not only improve their skills but to build their careers as well.

Take your time

The DFT year is designed to develop your basic competencies and prepare you for life as an NHS associate. It is *not* there to turn you into a Units of Dental Activity (UDA) machine. You will have a rare year in which you have a nominal target to get close to—1875 UDA, in my year—but you don't have to actually meet it. Some of your colleagues will be focused on churning out UDAs—especially in Wales, where excess UDAs actually go toward your practice total—but don't let UDAs affect the quality of your work and the care you provide. Try not to rush yourself, especially if you have the time and don't have busy books.

Let your trainer train you

Coming out of dental school, you're on a high and feel that you actually do know it all. In general practice, though, you don't have every material and piece of equipment known to man, and with seeing so many more patients you'll also see many more cases you're unfamiliar with.

Use your trainer to develop your skills and learn new things. Don't be offended if he or she wants to check your caries removal or look at your matrix band technique. No matter how good you are, there's always something you can improve upon. I was used to digital X-rays, for example, so switching to film was difficult for me at first. If I hadn't frequently visited my trainer for a second opinion on radiographs, I would never be able to confidently diagnose caries.

Making the Most of DFT and Opportunities That Lie Ahead

by Vedaant Patel



Reject the rotary

This will be the most painful piece of advice in this article: If you have the time—and even if you have rotary endodontic equipment available—I suggest that you avoid using it for as long as possible. Ask any endodontic specialist, who'll tell you that to perform RCT's well, you need good hand-filing technique.

Become a member of the MJDF or the MFDS

It's expensive, but if you're pursuing a year in dental core training or any sort of postgraduate training, then this is a must. Which one exactly doesn't really matter; while there are two sitting, go for the first one! This year, one of my DCT applications awarded points for having Part 1 completed, and if I had waited for the second sitting, I probably wouldn't have gotten a good job there.

You're a dentist—now you can teach

You've sat through five years of lectures (or five lectures, so why not share your knowledge? You don't need to be registered anywhere to provide verifiable continuing professional development (CPD), but make sure you're following General Dental Council guidelines on this area. Providing CPD to the dentists and nurses at my practice was a double hit: They refreshed their skills and received CPD credit, and by doing the research for my presentations, I reinforced my knowledge and added something to my CV.

Get out of the practice

The experience you get isn't limited to your dental practice; you have a large study day programme led by many experienced colleagues. Why not ask one or two of them to grant you the chance to shadow them for the day? A lot of trainers won't mind

giving you the day off for this reason, and you'll be surprised how much you can learn observing people—even if sometimes it's doing procedures you already know how to do.

Audit, audit and then audit your audits

OK, don't audit your audits, but it's always good to be a part of this process. While you may have to take part in one of these for your DFT training, why not do additional ones? The more you do, the more you'll understand, and the more it will help you in applying for DCT. I helped do two regular practice audits on record-keeping and radiographic quality, as well as doing another joint audit with some friends in other practices. While it was sometimes time-consuming, I don't regret any of it.

Is university really over?

DFT is, in my opinion, a sixth year of university: You're a professional but you're still allowed to have fun. (*I think* that's still permitted.) Your scheme is your tutor group, essentially, and you meet once a week, so be social and make plans. Some schemes get residencies sorted and sometimes these are paid for, but they're a lucky minority. Worcester didn't have this facility, but it didn't stop me from organising a weekend trip to Belfast for all of us early in the year!

Less money?! So why should I do it?

Dentistry isn't solely about money; it's about providing better care to your patients.

A DCT year is a structured post that will aid in increasing your academic knowledge and technical ability, as well as being a platform to start specialising (if this is something you'd like to do). Do not apply for it just because you don't like your DFT year. Applying for something just because

you don't like the alternative is not a wise decision. It may be dentistry and the real would you don't like—in which case you're still not going to like DCT.

How does it go?

The following is based on my application this year, and if the change to national recruitment occurs, then not all of this will apply:

Regional applications open at the end of January, and you have a month to complete the initial forms. While you have a month, applications like London and South West shortlist based on when you apply, not what's in your applications, so finish them on the first day ideally. (I did London in the first hour.) It's important to realise that some people will sail through DCT, but only a fool would bank on this.

Interview time!

When you get an interview or two, you need to prepare for them. Think about the material you covered for DFT and improve on this, focusing more on audit, research and reflection, as well as max-fax-type questions. Interestingly, London released the questions for the interviews 10 days in advance this year to make it fairer.

It's also worth mentioning that some of the places ask for a portfolio—think audit and publications, not clinical cases—so you may want to start developing this. Interviews take place in April, so you have ample time to prepare! ■

Vedaant Patel graduated from King's College London in July 2015, completed dental foundation training on the Worcester scheme (West Midlands), and successfully acquired four competitive dental core training (DCT1) posts. Patel now works part time as an associate dentist in Northwest London.