

**Name:** Yihan Miao

**Age:** 21

*A dental student at King's College London who enjoys dancing in his spare time, and is focused, artistic and determined*

Now entering my final year at King's College London, we work at two dental hospitals every week and once a fortnight at community practice. Clinic times are usually 9 a.m.–4:30 p.m. I've lived at several locations since starting in London four years ago, both near the university and farther away. Each has its merits and downsides, but because of the nature of London and its congestion during peak times, I've found living close to university a much more relaxed experience.

Starting from as early as second year at King's, we see patients and start practical work on them, applying what we learned through early demonstrations. As the years progress, the emphasis becomes more practical and less lecture-based. Each day is usually dedicated to a particular speciality or field, such as integrated clinical care, oral surgery, or paediatrics/orthodontics.

It's important to achieve a balanced and healthy lifestyle in a challenging profession where it's easy to burn out. I enjoy several sports, particularly tennis, and took up dancing two years ago. Activities outside dentistry have helped me to not only take my mind off work, but also to develop and improve other qualities and key skills such as communication and teamwork (through

playing in a football team) and to train my mental strength and determination (from challenging tennis matches and practising with professionals at the National Tennis Centre). After participating in two of the biggest student-organized dance shows in London—the King's College London Diwali Show and Barts—and the London Asian Society over the past two years, I've met new people, made fantastic friends and opened up a side of me I never would have realized I was capable of before. Like Sahil Sharma said in a previous edition, the rehearsals can be extremely tough and exhausting, but would I do it again, given the time and opportunity? Absolutely.

If you were to ask me 10 years ago or even possibly during GCSEs, I wouldn't have been able to tell you that I wanted to be a dentist. Committing to this profession does not come overnight. Without wishing for this to sound like your typical personal statement—"I wanted to be a dentist because I ..."—my interest grew in this field as it had a big impact on my life.

Almost every child at some point fears going to the dentist, and I was no exception, from being dragged to have a couple deciduous teeth taken out in China to being dragged to have a couple permanent premolars taken out in the UK. It seemed that my teeth, like me, just didn't want to cooperate, regardless of which continent I was on! After the crooked teeth came the braces, and a few years later, came the orthognathic surgery: My teeth, jaw, face, bite, whatever you want to add have all undergone reconstruction.

As a child, comprehending all this was hard, but I knew it made a difference. Now when I'm studying these topics, I can appreciate what my dentists and orthodontists and surgeons at Manchester Dental Hospital have done. Yes, sometimes I still have my old problems with smiling, eating or speaking. But dentistry is not mathematics; there is no definitive right or wrong. It's about helping patients and relieving their symptoms to something more manageable, and improving their quality of life, and mine certainly has.



*Yihan Miao, right, with fellow dancers on the day of their performance at the mayor of London's Diwali Trafalgar Square Showcase*

Of course, max-fax is not the only path in dentistry. The ultimate dentist for me is one who is well-rounded in providing a wide range of care for patients across all age groups. At this early stage of my career, I believe this is where I want to be. There are no specialities that stand out for me at this moment, and some I find are quite challenging, but one cannot pick and choose the patient who walks through the doors each day. Even though specializing has great benefits and is appealing for some, if I were to go down a particular path, there would be a lot of other opportunities lost elsewhere. It's important to retain a general and broad knowledge.

A conversation with a consultant last week really stuck in my mind. He said: "If you want to make tons of money from dentistry or medicine, you're doing it wrong. There are a million other ways to make money elsewhere. If you want a chilled job, you're in the wrong profession. We are doctors or dentists because only we have the knowledge and expertise make a difference to their lives. That is and should be the only reason why you are here."

There have been instances over the past few years during times of extreme stress when I've been driven to tears by a particularly difficult patient or patient's relative, despite doing everything I could to help them. I reflected and learned from those experiences but never felt like giving up, because the vast majority of times when you do your best to help someone, and they appreciate you for doing so, it is the best feeling in the world. ■

*Shri Dance, the dance crew that Yihan is a member of, performing at the King's College London Charity Diwali Show*

