

STUDENTS



DentaltownUK Honorary Associate Editor Kishan Sheth

Dear fellow colleagues, friends, ladies and gentlemen: I was deeply and truly honoured when I was appointed as the student honorary associate editor for the DentaltownUK publication, back in January 2017.

The entire concept of *Dentaltown* in the USA has empowered dentists all around the world and has been an extremely beneficial learning tool for students, including myself, and I was very excited to hear that the movement was being brought to the UK.

It is indeed a chance and an opportunity to discuss important matters and trends in dentistry and share ideas, which lead to the spreading of knowledge and generation of discussion and debate.

The primary goal of the student section is to empower undergraduate dental students to write about topics they are passionate about, and share their experiences with all their fellow dental students in the UK. Is there an area within dentistry that you have been reading about?

Would you like to put together a brief article summarising your findings? Have you read a book recently that you think has changed the way you view something? Would like to write up a book review?

Whatever empowers the profession and begins discussion should be shared for all to benefit from, and we all encourage the discussion of ideas which will help us to raise our standards and become more

effective providers of patient-centred, evidence-based, minimally invasive and holistic dentistry.

It has been exciting to witness the great explosion in discussion which *DentaltownUK* has sparked, and it has been empowering to see that students all around the UK have so much positive feedback, and that so many wish to get involved. In this edition we take a look at a day in the life of Dr Amit Patel, Periodontal Specialist and Clinical Lecturer at the University of Birmingham Dental School.

We also take a closer look at some of the tips and tricks to use when seeing your first patient as a dental student by Sagar Patel, BDS5 dental student at King's College London. I must congratulate both the authors of these articles for doing such a fantastic job. I also write a short article on my journey through public speaking as a dental student, and offer some advice on students wanting to get into the craft.

I am confident that *DentaltownUK* will continue to deliver an unrivalled service to the profession, and will continuously play a pivotal role in the way in which students and professionals come together. Enjoy this edition of *DentaltownUK*!



You don't run before you can walk. You don't walk before you can crawl.
(Birks, McKendree & Watt 2009).

Dental school is all about stages, all about phases. An experience in itself. You enter not knowing a lot about dentistry. You graduate expected to be a 'safe beginner' according to GDC guidelines (Bateman et al., 2016; GDC, 2016).

It's all about the milestones along the way. Your first extraction. Your first filling. Maybe even your first denture. But what comes before that? Let's start at the basics. Let's discuss at the beginning... the very beginning: Your first patient!

Depending on which dental school you are attending, you might have recently started seeing your first patient in clinical practice.

You might be about to see your first patient fairly soon. This article is a short guide, from the point of view of a final year student, designed to provide tips and tricks of the trade based on personal and peer experience.

When asking colleagues how they

Seeing Your First Patient: A Short Guide

by Sagar Patel, BDS5, King's College London Dental School

feel about seeing a new patient, can you guess the top answers? Stressed. Nervous. Excited. The latter of which is definitely well deserved considering the hurdles and exams one must pass to see a patient. The formers are natural. Birks et. al (2009) reported that dental students generally tend to experience more stress than medical students.

One reason might be due to pressure of desiring a good professional experience with a student's cohort of patients. Given that this experience is starting afresh, 'diving into unknown territory' could be the reason here.

Easier said than done, the trick is to keep calm and keep it simple. When you see your first patient, you know what you're doing. You wouldn't be there if you didn't. Try not to panic.

You might get flustered but it's about believing in yourself. There's no harm in preparing for a patient beforehand, and even bringing in some notes to appointment to help yourself. If you find that something makes it easier for you, helping you out in the process, go for it. Preparation and planning is always key!

Don't forget, you're not alone. You're never alone! You have a clinical partner. Someone who works with you at every stage. Someone who is in the exact same boat as you. Work off of each other, and learn from each other.

Help each other. It'll make the experience that much better, and you'll get more out of it. And who knows? You might just make a good new friend out of it all too!

If you are stuck, you also have your tutor. They're not here to judge you or criticise you. They're here to help you out. Whether you want an opinion on if something is a good idea, you want know the best way of doing something, or even if you have a totally unrelated question, they're the go-to people.

They've been in your shoes before, they know what it's like, and they are there to

make you a better dentist. Don't be afraid to ask questions, you're there to learn and improve your skills.

Improving in many skills naturally comes with time, time being the key word in many respects. A major pitfall early on with seeing your first patients is thinking that you're very slow, and that you should be able to do something fairly quickly.

This isn't a problem though! With experience, over the course of the next couple of months, and even years, you will naturally build up speed. It will happen. Don't overthink and stress yourself out over this skill immediately. Work on it and it will improve.

Another skill is communication. Treating and curing diseases will come with time, with experience. But words of care, comfort and compassion are therapeutic in itself. For over 2,500 years, the value of effective patient-clinician communication has been recognised (Frankel and Sherman, 2015).

Creating a healthy relationship with a patient is also shown to reduce burnout and play a role in the resilience of clinicians (Dyrbye et al., 2010).

By building the relationship with patients, your work and your dentistry will be that much easier and that much better.

You're also surrounded by older students in clinics, many individuals who were where you are not so long ago. They know what it is like to be doing a procedure for the first time.

If you want some advice, or are wondering the best way to tackle a certain scenario, they are people you can turn to for help too. I've never met any older student who wasn't more than willing to help out, providing ideas and information that has made me better at what I do. Sometimes it's the tips of someone in similar shoes that makes the biggest difference.

Probably the biggest take home message

though can be summed up in two words: Enjoy it! You have worked incredibly hard to get to where you are, from UCAS to interviews and even university assessments. You wanted to be in that position and it is a very rewarding position to be in. You have the ability to make a real difference to someone's life.

Enjoy the experience of working with patients. Enjoy working with your own peers. Enjoy the atmosphere and environment of your clinical setting. Five years of university can seem long to many people. It will fly by!

Seeing your first patient can seem like a daunting idea. But it is an incredible milestone to pass in your practicing career. Try not to focus on many negatives. Always look at the positives.

Look at how to improve, what to learn, and what to take away from your experiences. But enjoy what you do. Have fun with it. You just completed your first step to becoming a dentist!

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