

STUDENTS



DentaltownUK Honorary Associate Editor Kishan Sheth

**The concept of Dentaltown
has empowered and inspired
students and dentists around
the world.**

In particular, it has been a beneficial learning tool for students, including me, and I was excited to hear that the movement was being brought to the UK.

It's a chance to discuss important matters and trends in dentistry and to share ideas, which leads to the spreading of knowledge and generation of discussion and debate.

The primary goal of the magazine's 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.

Few magazines and publications of this calibre give the dental stars of tomorrow an opportunity to be recognised and listened to, but that's where *DentaltownUK* differs.

It believes in the talent of tomorrow and wants to give it a voice. Whatever empowers the profession and begins discussion should be shared for all to benefit from, and we all encourage the discussion of ideas that 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 the discussion that *DentaltownUK* has sparked. In this issue, we include an interview with Dr. David Radford, director of clinical studies at the University of Portsmouth Dental Academy.

Radford is an accomplished dental surgeon, educator and author. He has played an integral role in the management and expansion of the clinical and educational opportunities that the University of Portsmouth Dental Academy provides, and it's indeed a true honour to have him feature in this issue.

I'm 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.

I truly hope that you enjoy this issue!



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Studying dentistry is full of firsts—beginning with the moment you step into clinic (just as the realisation of the path you've taken hits) and moving through others, such as treating your first patient.

The latter is one of the most memorable points in your student career, and a memory that I am sure stays with you throughout your time as a dentist.

As a third-year dental student studying at Glasgow University, that moment happened at 9 a.m. Thursday, 27 July—a date that will ring in my memory forever and that seemed ever-looming, yet couldn't come fast enough.

After consulting with some peers, it's clear that the generalised feeling is that of nerves, anxiety and excitement. Each student experiences his or her own mixture of said feelings toward the moment in which we introduce ourselves to our first patients and in that moment feel the enormity of our professionalism, in which all of our education comes into play.

My experience of treating patients, differs from that of most other students, having qualified as a dental nurse and gaining 4 years' experience before I started courses. I knew what I was getting myself into.

I have a particular interest in the treatment of patients with anxiety and phobias, having been a part of a dental team where this is a great deal of the focus. Working in

Thoughts on Seeing Your First Dental Patient

by Lizzie Habbick, Bds3 Dental Student at Glasgow Dental School

such an environment and with such patients has allowed me to adapt my thinking around treating patients in general.

I knew that my first patient was aware that I was a student, so my greatest fear was coming across as underprepared—or, worse still, underconfident. To combat some of my own anxiety in the lead-up to beginning the third year and moving toward my first patient, I had been doing some at-home preparation.

I did some things out of necessity—recapting the knowledge I had gained thus far, along with further learning in more specific areas such as medications and conditions that I believe to be fairly common within the population.

Many people wince even at the slightest mention of paying a visit to the dentist—a concept that I'm sure many of you are aware of. With the environment having such a varying effect on patients and with our main priority being their care, it can sometimes be forgotten that dental students, too, have to deal with their own stresses and anxieties.

A study carried out only this year found that when compared with students enrolled in other topics, dentistry students have abnormally high levels of stress and anxiety—66.8 percent and 54.7 percent, respectively. I can understand how these levels can be so high, considering the nature of dentistry itself before the consideration of additional challenging situations are brought into the equation.

That being said, I've found dentistry to be a supportive course. With the constant peer learning, asking one another for help of advice seems to be a thing of ease. I believe every person has a different way of dealing with any situation, which can be useful in teaching each other alternative methods of thinking—that is, if the notions are shared and discussed between each other.

To avoid stress during my time at university, I read or, weather permitting, take my dog, Tess, on long walks. I also have a keen interest in mindfulness, a type of self-mediation, and have learned that if I take some time to myself, even to just gather thoughts on a situation, I can tackle whatever I face with a different outlook and may help to give an alternative approach.

Mindfulness also allows you to be brought more into the present situation, because it's the act of bringing yourself into the surroundings, allowing you to collect feelings and thoughts. This helps for focusing on what's at hand—a skill I believe is more than essential for not only students but also dentists, when sometimes copious amounts of pressure are present.

There are a few steps that can be followed in order to gain a mindset that's apt for gaining mindfulness. This includes three basic stages:

1. Pause. By pausing, you're able to halt the stress cycle.

2. Relax. Stop the tension signals sent to the brain that otherwise could cause disruptions in thought.

3. Be aware of the moment. With relaxation comes the ability to focus more on what's happening in the current moment, also allowing for an increase in ideas.

Other students in my year have their own methods to relax—some do photography, others draw—and the overarching theme from their responses is that the most common method or way to de-stress seems to be exercise. The NHS mentions suggestions that may aid in the management of stress:

- Share your problems with family or friends.
- Make more time for your interests and hobbies.
- Take a break or holiday.

- Exercise regularly and make sure you are eating healthily.
- Make sure you're getting enough sleep.

By following some of these, you can help to reduce the amount of stress you experience, I'm aware of which techniques work well for me in line with my life, and by using them I hope to be as prepared as I can be for treating my first patient. I don't think there will ever be a decrease in my slight panic—counting down the weeks, then days has become the norm—and with only a few days remaining I can only look forward to the final countdown. ■



Lizzie Habbick and her dog, Tess, on a stress-busting walk.

- 1 Basudan, Sumaya, Najla Binanzan, and Aseel Albassan. "Depression, Anxiety And Stress In Dental Students." *International Journal of Medical Education* 8 (2017): 179-186. Web. 10 July 2017.
- 2 Goldstein, Elisha. "10 Seconds To Less Stress." *Mindful*. N.p., 2015. Web. 13 July 2017
- 3 "Struggling With Stress? - Stress, Anxiety And Depression - NHS Choices." *Nhs.uk*. N.p., 2017. Web. 12 July 2017