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MINUTES WITH
**CLAIRE
BERRY**



Why did you decide on a career in Dental Hygiene?
I chose to become a Dental Hygienist when I was in the Army. I was in the Intelligence Corps but I knew I wanted to do something medical to fulfil my need to help others. I have an interest in anatomy and so a medical or dental career was appealing to me. When I looked into what a Dental Hygienist did I was sold on the idea, so I trained in dental hygiene through the Royal College of Surgeons Edinburgh while I was still serving and started my career in the Forces. It's the best decision I have ever made, and I am so passionate about my job.

Where do you practise?

Like many Hygienists I work between 3 practices in Doncaster and York. It seems normal for a Hygienist and Therapist to work between multiple practices and travel afar for work. I work for 3 fantastic places who are very prevention driven and therefore very supportive of me as a Hygienist.

What's the best and worst aspects of your job?

The best aspect of my job is the satisfaction I get from watching the turnaround in patients who are high risk of advancing periodontitis, when I have successfully changed their behaviour allowing them to go from having a high risk for the potential of tooth loss to stable and healthy.

One of the worst aspects of my job is that these exact patients sometimes think of us as the people who make their life difficult. Asking them to "brush for 20 minutes a day", use a multitude of instruments to do this, tell them to come back every few weeks or months, make their teeth sensitive, drown them with water, lecture them about interdental cleaning and then charge them for it and tell them to come back in 3 months. I am (partly) joking, of course! I have been known to high five my patients when they improve their oral hygiene dramatically, while they just look at me perplexed. At the end of it though, we know we are 'super Hygs' saving teeth all day, so that's all that matters.

Do you have any funny stories from your time in practice?

One that will always make me chuckle when I think about it is when a lady came in and said to me, "you will be proud of me, I now use those sticks and scrub my front bottom every day". I sat there with a straight face, remaining very professional and praised her for her continued commitment to improving the plaque control of her lower incisors.

You qualified 10 years ago. How have you continued to build on your knowledge?

Of course I carry out CPD training and the ability to

do eCPD is also very helpful. I attend conferences and go to CPD evenings held at a very plush local specialist practice in Harrogate. I have also invested in lengthier perio specific courses. Various manufacturers offer fabulous free CPD sessions; a recent example being an Oral-B 'Up-To-Date' seminar I attended. With speakers giving interesting lectures, a meal included and the chance to earn yourself some CPD, it's also a great way to network and share ideas with other clinicians. Sometimes it can be a lonely career if you are the only Hygienist at your practice.

What is the biggest professional challenge you've faced? How did you overcome this?

I do medical aesthetics alongside my dental career, mainly because I clearly and obviously love to be beyond extremely busy! My love for anatomy and specifically our training in head and neck anatomy meant that this was a natural progression. However, we come across hurdles and challenges all the time and as a consequence I have been published responding to an article in 'Aesthetic Medicine' magazine. I overcome these hurdles by writing to educate people in the fact that as a private Hygienist and with my training, knowledge and skillset, I am very well placed to provide aesthetic treatments like all Hygienists wanting to pursue this as a career option. We are increasingly being recognised in this industry now, with help from the BACDP and a fab team of Hygienists and Therapists paving the way in aesthetics.

Looking to the future, how do you feel that technology might facilitate better oral health?

We're seeing advancing technology all the time helping to improve general and oral health. We are a generation that appreciates what artificial intelligence (AI) can do to facilitate behavioural change. As a Dental Hygienist I use my Oral-B Test Drive every day to demonstrate better techniques in the patient's mouth in real time, showing them how much more effective it is compared to a manual toothbrush in order to maintain better oral hygiene. It's a much better tool to implement behaviour change than simply using a toothbrush on a model like we used to have to do before the Test Drive came along. Also, we have to take the Oral-B Genius 9000 into consideration. A tool that you can connect to your smart phone for facial recognition and use with the Oral-B app to allow for position detection to guide you. The whole range having pressure sensors and timers to ensure a minimum 2 minutes can be reached and reducing risk of tooth brush abrasion. There is almost no excuse to not be cleaning better as a

result of using this brush, as it shows patients where they've missed as well as where they've brushed.

Are there any lessons you've learnt over your 10 years in practice?

I used to take criticism from patients badly. If they said I was too rough, or lectured them, or made their teeth sensitive I wouldn't like it. I have to be honest, over the years I have adjusted the way I work and so don't hear these things anymore. Attending the perio specific courses over the years has meant I tackle treating perio in a much better way. For example, putting the emphasis on the patient and not solely on my RSD. Putting importance into learning how to implement behaviour change without it coming across like a lecture. Starting non-surgical periodontal therapy (NSPT) after they have reached a good level of plaque control so there are better treatment outcomes whilst also making the treatment more comfortable. Making sure I am as well trained in all aspects of being a good Hygienist as possible means patients tend to like me more these days, while I am doing more to help them. I don't know if I take criticism better, or I just don't seem to get criticism anymore!

What advice would you give to a newly qualified hygienist or therapist?

You have been to University for 2-3 years and you are a trained and registered professional who now has a responsible and very skilled job. You have arguably one of the most important preventative roles in the dental team, making sure your patient base doesn't get or progress with issues that may cause them distress, pain and tooth loss. You are a valuable member of the practice. Make sure you are as skilled and trained as you possibly can be so you can be the best for your team and your patients. Don't allow yourself to feel any less than this when you are looking for jobs after qualifying. You deserve to be treated and seen like the professional you are.

What do you believe is the single most important skill for a Hygienist?

100% behaviour change. Implementing a change in behaviour so that the emphasis is on the patient's home care routine and a team work approach. You can be the most skilled scaler in the world, but it is all about making sure the patient understands why their role is more important in the treatment plan, what they have to do to effectively stick to their end of the team work approach and to ensure they can implement a routine that is achievable daily for long term stable results. This is only achieved if you can implement behaviour change.