

A day in the life: experienced dental hygienist

Debbie Gee shares her perspectives and offers a glimpse into her daily working life

I have worked in dentistry for nearly 30 years, initially as a nurse before qualifying as a hygienist in 1993. I have been at my current practice for nearly eight years and I have been able to build some great relationships with my patients. I love being able to offer a personal touch to their appointments and I think that continuity of care is very important.

My day is busy and my time is well utilised. We are particularly proud of the thorough oral health screening our patients are offered every six months, which includes yearly pocket charting, bleeding indices, radiographs, intraoral imaging, professional cleaning and any necessary advice.

Combined exam

We have also developed a dental health review, which is often referred to as a combined exam.

This combined exam is a dental consultation with an examining dentist and a hygienist. I have found that this works incredibly well to help patients understand the treatment recommended and this is reflected in patient acceptance. When the patient participates in this three-way conversation it takes away the mystery of dental treatment and they feel able to ask questions more readily.

If active periodontal disease is detected in any



patient, I offer a course of active treatment to suit. I complete regular pocket charting and bleeding indices to demonstrate progress and improvement, and I take great care to involve the patient by explaining the treatment and outcomes. Knowledge is power and I find if patients fully grasp the reasons we ask them to carry out certain techniques at home, compliance is so much better.

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Our practice also places implants regularly. I feel that we have a responsibility to these patients to help them protect their investment. It is part of my remit to see our implant patients every three months for periodontal maintenance.

Fantastic team

I am lucky enough to have the support of a fantastic dental nursing team. The nurses go through our patient list the day before appointments and check what is needed to enable me and the other clinicians to deliver services as efficiently as possible.

They provide all relevant information including any problems that may occur, such as patients that do not like to use the ultrasonic scaler, for example.

Away from the treatment room I manage the blog for the practice, which includes a planned rota of current and interesting titles, written by team members. I try to allocate topics to suit each professional's interests.

We have been part of the Portman Group for just a few short months, and we as a team were a little anxious about the acquisition. Corporate dental groups are not always given the best press from patients or dental professionals. However, we have found that Portman Healthcare has supported our way of working and readily supplies all the tools and sundries we need to deliver a high standard of care.

As a practice we have also found the group to be very supportive of our team – our views have been listened to and the all-important team spirit is actively nurtured, which in my experience is the backbone to any successful dental practice. **D**

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Debbie Gee is a dental hygienist at the Cahill Dental Care Centre, which has recently become part of the Portman Healthcare Group and a member of the Association of Dental Groups (ADG).

TO FIND OUT more about the world of ADG, visit www.dentalgroups.co.uk.