

AN ORTHODONTIST'S LIFE

I usually get up at about 7.10 am although sometimes one of my children may decide it's better that I get up earlier. My wife Anne and I have two girls aged two and six.

This is really sad, but the first thing I often do when I wake up is check the balances of the practice bank accounts via the online banking on my phone – even before I get out of bed! As the owner of two businesses, I like to keep a tight control on cash flow.

After this Anne and I will usually roll up our metaphorical sleeves and commence the daily battle of getting the kids ready for school and the childminder.

Anne is an infant school teacher not far from my Wirral practice. This means that it is not unusual for a number of my patients to have been taught by my wife when they were younger. That is nice as we both feel we play a part in the same community. It also means I can quiz patients about what my wife is like at work!

I always have a bowl of Shreddies for breakfast. Being serious about oral health, obviously I never have the 'frosted' variety.

I drive to work each day and travel alone, 15 minutes to Sunlight Orthodontics in the Wirral or about 45 minutes to Rainford Orthodontics in St Helen's. I don't mind the longer commute because the traffic is never really bad and, living in an all-female house, it's when I get some 'me' time and can listen to music of my liking.

I qualified as a specialist in orthodontics in 2006 having completed my orthodontic training in Sheffield and Chesterfield. I then returned home to the Wirral after living away for 14 years. I did a number of locum and associate jobs before buying a practice from a retiring specialist in 2010. The practice was named after her, so instead of changing my name by deed poll to match, the existing staff and I discussed a number of possible new names. The suggestions 'Amazing

'IT'S A REAL PRIVILEGE TO SEE HOW PATIENTS GROW IN CONFIDENCE'

Specialist orthodontist **Joe Dwyer** from the Wirral has just won the Against the Odds award from the British Orthodontic Society for the orthodontic treatment he gave 14-year-old Joel Glanvill.



Joe Dwyer receiving his trophy from Capital FM newsreader Holly Jones at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists in London on 5 March 2016. He also received £750 of travel vouchers

Brace' and 'Dwyer's Wires' were rejected early on and we settled on 'Sunlight Orthodontics' as the practice is on the edge of the village of Port Sunlight. We also thought it was quite a nice, happy-sounding name. In addition, in 2012 I transitioned from associate to partner in a specialist orthodontic practice in Rainford on the outskirts of Liverpool. My business partner retired in 2014 so I then became the sole owner of Rainford Orthodontics too.

I work 35 clinical hours a week, working alternate days at each practice. I know business gurus will advise against this but I usually do admin at lunchtime and sometimes evenings. I'm lucky though to have two excellent practice managers to help me.

On Thursday lunchtime I drive from the Wirral practice to the afternoon clinic at Rainford. I look forward to this drive as this is when I get to listen to the latest 'hot topics' being discussed by Jeremy Vine on Radio 2.

For lunch I'll usually eat a sandwich I made the night before whilst paying a mountain of bills via online banking.

At school, I really liked science and also art. I couldn't imagine working in a lab all day so wanted a job where I could have contact with people. Dentistry seemed a pretty good combination of science, art and communication skills.

I did consider medicine. However, this was the early 90s when working hours and conditions for junior

doctors were very poor. Unfortunately, judging by recent events in the media, it saddens me that not much seems to have changed in the past quarter of a century. I decided that dentistry would hopefully allow me to have a good balance between work and a future family life.

I 'fell' in to orthodontics. After a number of years in general dental practice I started a training post to become a specialist in restorative dentistry. However, I had some exposure to orthodontics in my first few years in practice as my trainer's wife qualified as an orthodontic specialist the same year I qualified as a dentist. I realised part way through my restorative training that I had made a mistake and dropped down to senior house officer grade so I could later re-apply for an orthodontic post instead. I was delighted when I was accepted at Sheffield. What I really liked about orthodontics was how you could transform someone's appearance in a way which still preserved tooth tissue. As patients are seen for regular adjustments and comprehensive orthodontic treatment usually takes 12 to 24 months or so, you also get to build a relationship with them. It's a real privilege to see how people grow in confidence and feel much better about themselves as a result of the treatment they receive. It really is a very rewarding career and if I had my time again I would still choose to do orthodontics. However, I'd like to already have passed the exams!

I haven't had orthodontic treatment myself, but as a result of trauma and nocturnal bruxism, I have been on the receiving end of pretty much every other aspect of dentistry including root canal treatment, crown and bridgework and even an implant.

The bulk of my work is with patients aged 10 to 17. About a third of my time is spent with adult patients. Orthodontics seems to be becoming more and more popular with adults, especially in recent years with advances that have been made in appliances which are less visible than traditional 'train tracks'.

Unlike perhaps a generation ago, these days there seems to be very

little stigma associated with traditional fixed appliances among schoolchildren. Child patients look forward to picking the colour of the elastics to fit on the brackets; matching football team colours is particularly popular, although it can sometimes seem like hours have passed waiting for a patient to decide which colour they want that visit! It gives the patient a greater sense of involvement in their treatment which is a good thing.

Adults are generally much keener that their appliances are more discreet. At the practices we offer ceramic labial appliances, Invisalign clear aligners and also lingual appliances as alternatives. Lingual braces in particular have come on in leaps and bounds in the past ten years and can now achieve just as good results as traditional fixed appliances.

It felt great to be nominated for the Against the Odds award because the award is about the patient's experience and how their lives and self-esteem are improved as a result, which for me is what orthodontics is all about. The patient, Joel's malocclusion was certainly more challenging than most. However, he was very co-operative and did everything that was asked of him. We were all delighted he was happy with the outcome and it was a real privilege to see him grow in confidence as a result.

I usually get home from work for 5.30 pm so I can spend some time with the children before they go to bed. I work a full week – as a relatively new business owner the practices do take up quite a bit of my time – but I don't work weekends and more recently I've been able to take more time off than in the past. This has largely been due to the help of the orthodontic therapists who are a brilliant addition to the orthodontic workforce. I also have a fantastic associate and a great dental team. I really value the work they put in to make sure we provide as good a service as possible for our patients.

I don't have a great deal of time for hobbies with the businesses and a young family. To relax, whenever I can I try to close my eyes and look at the inside of my eyelids for as long as possible!

I think the most important thing in life is to have good quality relationships with the people who matter to you: to enjoy time with friends and to have a long and happy family life.

INTERVIEW BY KATE QUINLAN

BOOK REVIEW



OXFORD HANDBOOK OF ORAL & MAXILLOFACIAL SURGERY

Luke Cascarini, Clare Schilling,
Ben Gurney and Peter Brennan
Oxford University Press
price £26.72 pp 292
ISBN 9780199583294

Forming one part of the successful, well-recognised series of 'Oxford Handbooks' for clinical specialities, this book takes the reader through a logical sequence of chapters, starting with the basic sciences, including anatomy, dental occlusion and examination techniques; through to more advanced learning, including skull fractures, oncology and emergencies (eg retrobulbar haemorrhage, bleeding and the compromised airway). Each chapter is well illustrated with photographs, radiographs and systematic diagrams.

As a maxillofacial senior house officer (SHO), I find this textbook a valuable, quick and easy-to-read resource to refer to when on clinic, in accident and emergency or in theatre. In addition, it is pocket sized and vinyl covered, making it practical to carry around and easy to keep clean. A particular highlight is the section on suturing facial lacerations – a 'bread and butter' element of any SHO's toolbox of clinical skills. This chapter details the key points for lip, ear, eyebrow, eyelid and nose lacerations, as well as general principles, avoiding any unnecessary superfluous information.

I feel this textbook should have a place on all SHOs' bookcases, supporting and revising the more advanced science covered in other core textbooks. For those who are preparing for postgraduate examinations the section on basic knowledge and oral medicine is particularly useful, covering common exam topics such as the attachments of muscles of mastication and blistering diseases.

The strength of this textbook is in providing an easy-to-read and understandable guide to the maxillofacial subjects, combining relevant best practice evidence with comprehensive explanations of current treatment methods and applicable clinical advice. I would not hesitate in recommending this textbook to fellow SHOs, more senior colleagues or general dental practitioners wanting a quick reference guide and update to the core area of this subject. It is also very affordable and online e-book versions are available.

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