

# ‘There is a family

# atmosphere in our lab’

**Willette Jean Lati** is a 26-year-old dental technician and Clear Aligner Department Assistant Manager at NimroDental Orthodontic Solutions in London.

## Dental destiny

When I was at school, like most people, I was quite indecisive about what I wanted to do when I grew up. From a young age till about secondary school it ranged from wanting to be a palaeontologist, doctor, vet, chef, scientist to artist.

I was born in the Philippines but because of my mum's work we were relocated to Sydney, Australia when I was about two-years-old. After five years, we moved back to the Philippines to further my education for about six years. We moved to London in 2002 where I started at Year 10.

Not doing particularly well during my A-levels (chemistry, biology, maths and psychology), I had to look for an alternative course that catered to my interest in both art and science. A google search turned me to the direction of dental technology. So I guess it was like destiny.

## Work experience

To secure a place on a dental technology course is not very difficult providing you have five GCSEs at A\*-C (especially in maths, science and English) and don't mind getting your hands dirty. It may be difficult, however, to find a dental laboratory to take you on as an apprentice if you don't have any prior experience. Work experience before you start studying is also recommended as it will give you a better idea of what sort of business you're getting yourself into.

I started work experience at NimroDental in 2007 whilst I was studying my BTEC course in Dental Technology and have been there ever since.

I completed a Foundation degree in Dental Technology in 2009. Both my BTEC and Foundation Degree courses tried to condense the principles and practical techniques of all departments of dental technology (prosthetics, orthodontics and prosthodontics) in a span of three years. But I would say that courses focus more on denture or crown and bridge work.

My class was attended by a majority of girls of a wide range of different ages and backgrounds; there with only two boys among us. But I found that other groups or batches were quite male dominated.

I enjoyed the practical aspect of my foundation course more than the academic as I am more of a hands-on sort of learner. It was interesting to learn and make different sorts of appliances used in dentistry that many would take for granted. I enjoy being able to build, recreate, add detail and finish things with my hands using different mediums.

The academic side of my course was a bit challenging, and also learning to make new appliances - but practice and persistence does help to improve and perfect new skills.

## In the lab

At NimroDental I make a fair range of appliances in the lab such as retainers, clear aligners, removable appliances and Inman aligners. I have worked my way up from plaster room technician to assistant manager.

I am currently based on the famous Harley Street although I wasn't initially aware of its reputation until I started working in the lab. Previously we were located just off Paddington Street; I used to personally do collections and drop-offs of impressions and appliances in the Harley Street area and got to meet or see some of London's well known dentists and orthodontists. It was fascinating to learn that a small area has such a huge reputation of quality of care and services both from the medical and dental field. It was also nice to bump into the odd celebrity every now and then.

I am currently Assistant Manager of our Clear Aligner Department headed by Agnieszka Horton, specialising in the new digital clear aligner movement system and 3D printed models. I also attend dental tradeshow to raise our company's profile in the dental and orthodontic industry.

I support my colleague Sophie Cook





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(@Nimrodental\_SC on Twitter), who is Head of Marketing, with our social media accounts. I would like to make special mention of our mentor Jowita Penkala of Uniqabrand for teaching us the power of social media marketing through Twitter and Facebook since November 2014. I have never used Twitter for personal use but found that it is an amazing tool to connect to all types of people in the dental industry. As a lab it is rare for us to be involved with or to interact with the general public, but we do try to maintain good relationships with our clients such as dentists, cosmetic dentists and orthodontists across the UK and in Europe.

### **A family atmosphere**

Having been at NimroDental for more than seven years, there is an almost family-like atmosphere. We are a continuously growing lab with currently over 30 individuals including the office team.

As a company we enjoy each other's company even after work hours. We organise monthly work drinks at nearby local pubs or bars. A few of us have even been travelling around Europe together.

Regarding my future career ambitions, this may sound cheesy but they are to be the best at what I do and to continue to improve and learn every day, whether it is dental-related or not. I subscribe to a yearly magazine to regularly update my CPD hours and try to attend lectures or find free CPD websites online to keep my skills up to date.

I usually finish work around 5 pm but stay a little longer on busier days. To relax or let off steam after work I sometimes go to the gym to swim or train, do a bit of hot yoga or even just spend a couple of minutes in the sauna.

To be honest, I haven't got a clue what I would have done if I hadn't become a dental technician! Wherever the wind had taken me I suppose. I don't have a set path and just take any opportunities that come my way.

If you are good with your hands and have an interest in science, then I would definitely recommend a career in dental technology to others.

### **What three things can Willette not live without?**

1. My iPhone to connect with people
2. The Internet to connect with the world
3. Sour candies/sweets because I have a bit of a sweet (sour) tooth which is a naughty thing in my profession!

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