

# ‘The training was intense but rewarding’

Dental therapist **Maddy Johnson**, 22, who lives in Leeds, went from VT to a four-month intensive training programme with IMI Clinics\* in Italy.

## Becoming a dental therapist

I am originally from Matlock in Derbyshire. When I was in year 10, I did a week's work experience at a local dental clinic in Matlock and since then I knew I wanted to choose a career in dentistry. I loved seeing patients being treated, so I tried to get as much experience as possible spending afternoons in various practices before going to university.

I left school and went straight onto my degree, BSc (Hons) Oral Health Science at the University of Manchester, a three-year course. I really enjoyed my course, mainly because we were taught in such a small, close-knit group. It was very hands-on, so aside from lectures and tutorials, we were also given case studies to work on which is so important for preparing you for the real world.

I really enjoy the prevention side of my role and am very motivated to help people achieve good oral health.

## Vocational training

When I graduated I decided to do optional vocational training (VT) for dental therapy as I was keen to gain more practical and clinical experience. I also gained lots of insight and it really helped when working with kids.

When I finished VT, I realised my perio knowledge was lacking. IMI had contacted our tutors at the university to inform them about the clinic they were planning to open in Leeds – the first IMI Clinic to open in the UK. That was how I found out about IMI and

started looking into the training programme. This was the first time I'd heard of laser-assisted therapy guided by a microscope. It really intrigued me to find out more.

I had an interview with IMI and visited the clinics in Italy (where IMI was founded) in Florence, Turin and Milan during a week's work experience in September 2014. I saw three parts of the IMI network, met the teams and saw their work in practice. They were like no other clinics I had seen.

## Moving to Italy

I started a four-month intensive training programme with Dr Francesco Martelli, IMI's founder and lead clinician, in April 2015. The timing worked perfectly with me finishing my vocational training. I joined a small group of Italian trainees and took part in various tutorials and hands-on practice on mannequins. I also shadowed Dr Martelli in the IMI clinics in Italy. It was fascinating to see him work and getting one-to-one training was fantastic.

I spent a year in Italy in total, based in Milan, Florence and Padua. The training was intense but rewarding. Building on my UK training in Manchester I had to approach patient therapy differently and develop my knowledge even further. I was using new equipment, for example the Nd:YAG laser and microscope, and I was learning a new approach to treating patients with periodontal disease. With the help of IMI and under the supervision of Dr Martelli I learnt all about the Perioblast protocol. Having the chance to assist and observe minimally invasive surgery and other dental procedures with the use of the microscope and lasers extended my knowledge further.

Italy is a wonderful country and I feel privileged to have experienced living there. A few of the team speak English so there wasn't too much of a language barrier but I made a real effort to learn some Italian by studying

\*IMI Clinics approach dental treatment through the use of non-invasive and biological procedures, focusing on periodontal health. Dentists and dental hygienists are trained by IMI (the International Microdentistry Institute) to use PERIOBLAST – PERIODontal Bio Laser ASsisted Therapy to 'eliminate' periodontal pathogens below the gum line in conjunction with scaling and root planing.



and having some lessons after work. Living in Italy was fantastic and my Italian colleagues are now friends. I will definitely be visiting – both for work and pleasure!

### **A new way of working**

I had never come across the IMI way of working before, so it was all new to me, but really amazing to be learning such a cutting-edge technology in dental therapy. One of the major differences is that all the work we do is guided by microscopes. This enables such precision. It sounds obvious, but it's really incredible how much more you can see this way. With practice working this way becomes second nature. It's also great for patient compliance. Showing the patient how to clean each tooth with care is so much easier when magnified onto a TV screen. By looking at the patient's pre and post-treatment microbiology we can identify bacterial load and demonstrate a positive improvement. Using lasers can reduce the need for surgery, they're minimally invasive and they can promote the regeneration of bone in infra-bony defects. Combining all these factors means that patients with the right follow-up can achieve good oral health and help to keep their teeth for life. Dr Martelli and his team developed the system with 25 years of experience and practical application in Italy.

### **Back in Britain**

I returned to the UK in April 2016. The Leeds IMI Clinic opened in May so we have been busy welcoming new patients and taking bookings. I feel lucky to be part of IMI and the first clinic launched in the UK. It's an exciting time for the business and for dentistry in the UK.

### **Downtime and future plans**

When I'm not at work I enjoy travelling and spending time with my family and friends. My family are really excited about the way my career is going.

I like to make sure everyone near and dear to me knows the importance of maintaining their oral health. No doubt my family will be booking appointments with the team at IMI Leeds!

My plans for the future are to continue to build my knowledge and maybe do some research. In the long term I would like to take on more of a training and development role.

### **Three things I can't live without**

Ice cream (so Italy was perfect!), my phone and of course my toothbrush.

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