'I love being involved in dentistry'

Name: Yasmin Aydin

Age: 24

Hometown: Morecambe, Lancashire

Qualifications: BSc Dental Hygiene and Therapy, University of Birmingham

Current study: Graduate-entry BDS Dentistry, University of Central Lancashire

Hobbies: Cycling, arts and crafts

Yasmin Aydin secured a place at dental school by first completing a degree in dental hygiene and therapy. She is now an undergraduate dental student and the first student to Chair a Section of the British Dental Association (BDA).

Early ambitions

From a young age, I wanted to be either a dentist or a mechanic. Although the latter may seem unusual for a young girl's career ambition, it isn't a million miles away from dentistry as manual dexterity plays a large part in both jobs. During school I always preferred practical learning over theory based.

I first worked in a dental practice during my year 10 work experience when I was 14-years-old. This was decision time: I had to choose between a heavy duty Black and Decker drill or a delicate dental hand piece. I decided to go down the dental route and spent my two weeks at a local dental practice in Lancaster. I loved everything about this experience and didn't want it to end there. The practice agreed to let me attend for work experience and observation every Wednesday afternoon during my two years in sixth form. For this I am extremely grateful as I learned a lot about dentistry and how important it is to work together as a team.

In the dental practice I loved the interaction with patients and the feeling of being able to positively make a difference to someone's life. I also liked the fact that I get to use my hands; dentistry is like art: sometimes there's a blank canvas and other times you're given something unpredictable as every patient is different. Either way you have to make it work. Once everything is finished it is great looking at what you've just created and achieved. Every dentist should take pride in their work; the patient will definitely appreciate it.

Although I had always been interested in dentistry, I didn't get the grades at A-level. So, I completed a three-year undergraduate degree in dental hygiene and therapy at the University of Birmingham, and thoroughly enjoyed the practical element of the course.

Applying to dental school

Applying for dental school was stressful as I was also entering my finals on my first degree. I thought by applying it was worth a try and I had nothing to lose; the UCAS application was similar to the previous application process which I completed during sixth form.

I was surprised to receive interview invitations from all the universities I had applied to for dentistry and found securing a place was easier this time round. Although I felt there would be competition from school leavers with higher academic grades, I had the experience from a dental hygiene and therapy degree which included working with and treating patients, therefore I didn't let this put me off.

After attending numerous university open days, I liked the modern facilities and technology provided by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan); I felt these were important as dentistry is continuously progressing with the help of new technology. Unlike traditional dental schools, UCLan starts practical experience very early (in the first year): patient interaction takes place in Dental Education Centres (DECs) and you are assigned one to work at for the full duration of the course. I was given the Morecambe DEC; as this is my hometown I was delighted and moved back home after four years away. As I am originally from Lancashire I was also familiar with Preston - where the main UCLan campus is - and the surrounding areas.

After graduating as a dental hygienist and therapist, I worked in London for just under a year at three different practices in different areas, as well as doing locum work, before my BDS course started.

Starting dentistry

I was so excited to finally be starting dentistry. The other students had all completed a previous degree therefore we were all of a similar age. Out of a class of almost 30 students, three of us were dental hygienists and therapists, although some other students were qualified dental nurses from either before or after their first degree.

Unlike most dentistry courses, during both my degrees clinical/practical work started in first year which was great for experience. Although dentistry includes much more clinical variety and responsibility than dental hygiene and therapy, during my first degree there was an equal amount of pressure clinically as I was still caring for patients, with their treatment and comfort as priority. Standards were set very high; I believe this was partly to prove the high level of skill required to be a dental hygienist/therapist as this particular role is not as well-known within the team.

For dentistry the academic level of work is higher in some areas such as human health and disease but then very similar in other subjects related more to dentistry. There is a lot of cross-over academically between both subjects.

patients the opportunity to attend for treatment and education in order to improve their oral health. The water is fluoridated in Birmingham therefore the caries rate was relatively low and restorative treatment was less common than periodontal.

Two out of three of the practices where I worked in London were also in deprived areas. The population in these areas consisted greatly of Southern Asians, differing greatly to the ethnic group of Morecambe, which is mainly white British. Cultural habits for Southern Asians such as chewing the betel nut has a great impact on oral health and was commonly presented as black staining on the teeth.

Becoming BDA Section Chair

The BDA section meetings/presentations are advertised in Morecambe DEC and as they are local it is easy for me to attend. My DEC tutor circulated an email stating that the BDA section committee required a student rep. After showing my interest I shared this role with another student. After a year as student rep, the committee elected me for chair and I was delighted and honoured to accept this role.

and discussed by the whole committee.

Students are always present and those living in the area try and attend most section lectures. DCPs are welcome to attend although I haven't met any yet.

I love being involved in dentistry and especially as it is for a local committee, I feel very proud to represent the North West Lancaster and Morecambe section. When I didn't get the grades for dentistry in sixth form it was tough and I would never have thought in a couple of years I would be the first student to become Chair of a BDA section.

Fitting it all in

The meetings and lectures organised by the BDA Section start in October and finish around April so there's a long summer break. Section presentations/lectures are held once a month in the evening therefore it doesn't take up a lot of my time, or interfere too much with my studies. There will be more pressure around exam time but the meetings will be a nice revision break.

My year working in practice as a dental care professional was of course very different to my life as a student; for a start there were no exams! In practice I didn't have a nurse which put pressure on time keeping and made the day seem longer as I was alone, whereas at dental school we all nurse for each other and help each other with difficult clinical situations.

I still haven't decided where I would like to work after graduation, but I would love to specialise. I'm really interested in minor oral surgery and have a hospital placement in a few weeks' time where I'll get to find out more about the subject and get properly stuck in!

Outside of dentistry I make novelty gifts and crafts with a vintage feel which I take to art and craft fairs. Last Christmas I got a really cute mint green bike so I've recently started cycling which is lovely, especially along Morecambe prom.

I would encourage other DCPs to apply to dental school if they were interested, definitely. The DCPs I trained with would be more than capable clinically and academically, although it takes a lot of hard work and determination. To go into a second degree straight after undergraduate graduation is a long time to have continuous exams, but on the other hand going back into education after being in work is also very difficult; being on a full-time course there's little time to have another job.

If I hadn't chosen dentistry, I would have been a mechanic, obviously! On a serious note, I can't imagine not being involved in dentistry, whether that's as a dental hygienist/therapist or as a dentist.

bdjteam2016170

'DENTISTRY IS LIKE ART: SOMETIMES THERE'S

A BLANK CANVAS AND OTHER TIMES

YOU'RE GIVEN SOMETHING UNPREDICTABLE AS

EVERY PATIENT IS DIFFERENT.'

During my first degree I was timetabled to be in university for lectures almost every day as well as attending different clinics and external placements throughout the course, whereas at UCLan lectures are delivered in clusters where we attend a few days every month. Clinics are set on the same two days throughout the year and are always at the Morecambe DEC. There are external placements at local hospitals but these usually take place once or twice and are for a few days at a time.

Lancashire life

I love being back home in Lancashire! I'm a born and bred Morecambe girl therefore I know the area very well and enjoy being by the beach. From a dental point of view, the North-west has the highest caries rate in England and suffers very much from dental neglect. As some areas of Morecambe have a high instance of deprivation, this is reflected in patients' dental health and by having a DEC in Morecambe it gives

Editor's note: Since joining the BDA Section, Yasmin is said to have 'sent a breath of fresh air through the section; her pub quizzes have brought students and local dentists together in a whole new way'. This was mentioned in a letter to the editor of the BDJ from another member of the BDA Lancaster & Morecambe Section, Wendy Thompson.

The section already organised social events such as balls and dinner dances before I arrived! I think Wendy's comment about me bringing a breath of fresh air to the section referred to the fact that I'm so enthusiastic and interested in dentistry. Most of the section members are more experienced dentists who perhaps don't have as much free time as I do to plan social gatherings.

I have arranged a pub quiz and social drinks night and have been involved in the discussion/planning of other activities which will take place over the next year including wine and cheese tasting, a walk across Morecambe Bay, meals and quizzes. Most of the events are organised