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the elderly gentleman in the chair. A nurse was shadowing me at the time and we tried to stem the flow with our hands, but to no avail. In the end, we had to get a bucket to collect the water until we worked out how to turn the mains off. The dentist was the ultimate professional and carried on with the patient’s treatment whilst we cleared up the carnage! The patient recalled that it was the best and funniest experience he’d ever had at the dentist and did not mind being soaked in the process!

We have plenty of funny moments. Usually it’s the old and the young who make us laugh the most. One elderly gentleman was convinced he’d come to us to have his feet looked at. To placate his concern we actually took his shoes off, admired his socks and said that today we were going to focus on his mouth! Children are always dropping their parents in it, with comments like ‘Daddy doesn’t brush his teeth that often’ or ‘Mummy doesn’t like the dentist’.

*You’ve been dental nursing for quite a few years now, are there any areas of dentistry that particularly interest you?*

I love oral health education. It’s tremendously rewarding to think that you can prevent disease through brushing your teeth properly and managing your diet. It’s such a simple message, but the consequences of not adhering to it can be catastrophic. Oncology is another area that interests me, and one in which I will seek further training. Cancer touches so many people. Oncologists do an amazing job in treating the disease, but often don’t have the necessary time to reinforce the oral health implications of treatment.

*We know you’re involved in charitable work. Can you tell us a little more?*

I started working as a volunteer for BrushUpUK about two years ago. The communities served by BrushUpUK are different to those in which the majority of us work. Educating patients within a surgery environment is challenging, but at least those patients are partly engaged in their

oral health as they’ve actually visited a dental practice! BrushUpUK is targeting the 50% of people who do not regularly visit a dentist, in particular those that are most ‘at risk’ such as the elderly, those in palliative care and SEN schools. I can honestly say that I get as much benefit from my contribution as the audience that I educate do.

**‘I LOVE MY TEAM AT SHEPTON MALLET AND LEARN FROM THEM ALL THE TIME, BUT THERE’S DEFINITELY MORE TO BE GAINED FROM REACHING OUT BEYOND YOUR “PRACTICE BUBBLE” TO THE WIDER DENTAL COMMUNITY.’**

*Are you going to this year’s Dental Showcase at the NEC? What’s the best thing about attending dental industry events?*

I do plan to attend Showcase, as I know it’s the biggest industry event in the dental calendar. The appeal to me comes from the broad range of lectures on offer. It’s a great opportunity to top-up your CPD, but really it’s more than that. You could achieve CPD very easily online, but I do not believe that this is the same experience as hearing the lecture live at an event.

*How important do you think it is for dental nurses to attend trade events (from a career development and CPD perspective)?*

If you have the ways and means to get to a dental event I would urge any dental nurse to go. Meeting other people who work in the same industry is invaluable. You can exchange ideas and share best practice. I love my team at Shepton Mallet and learn from them all the time, but there’s definitely more to be gained from reaching out beyond your ‘practice

bubble’ to the wider dental community. Dental Showcase is at the NEC so it’s easy to get to and very ‘do-able’ in a day.

*Is there any other advice you’d give to dental nurses entering the profession?*

If you want to specialise in something, such as radiography, then go for it! I believe that you should allow your work to broaden your mind and outlook on life. Treating patients who differ widely in terms of age, ethnicity and background, really does help you to see things differently. Don’t make snap judgments; the patient who looks grumpy in the waiting room could simply be nervous. Imagine the satisfaction you’d feel if you managed to break down the barrier and that same patient left with a smile on their face. I congratulate nervous patients by telling them that they’ve

done the hardest part by entering the practice when they had the choice not to! This is empowering and can also put them at ease.

**BDIA Dental Showcase**

**Date:** 19-21 October 2017

**Venue:** Birmingham NEC

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