'You must push boundaries and be adventurous'

Dental nurse and practice manager **Priya Sharma** grew up in Canada and moved to the UK in 2006. In addition to writing for *BDJ Team*, Priya has a varied background in pharmacy and pharmacovigilance, sits on the GDC's fitness to practise panel, and is married with two children.

I usually get up by 5 am in order to have everything organised for the children and be able to keep up for the rest of the day. A coffee is a must. My husband and I have two lovely children: our daughter is nine and our son is five. They truly are the centre of my universe.

I was born in Boston, USA then when I was five-years-old my family and I moved to Canada. I moved to the UK in 2006. I currently live in Chorleywood, Hertfordshire. It gives you the serenity and beauty of the countryside while being close enough to London.

I usually take the train to Marylebone station - it takes approximately 30 minutes - and then take a quick refreshing walk to Lister House Dental Clinic on Wimpole Street.

If I am working for the General Dental

Council in my role as a fitness to practise panellist (on which I have served since 2013) then the hearings can take place in various locations in London such as Wimpole Street, Farringdon and Liverpool Street. In addition to being a dental nurse and practice manager, I write articles and review policies for various

publications and companies, and I usually do this work from the practice.

For me there is no such thing as a typical week - it unfolds with various different assignments. I have become quite competent in prioritising and time management. It keeps it all very exciting.

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Lunch is usually a quick affair at the desk but we do treat ourselves to lovely lunches and coffees on Marylebone High Street.

When I left high school, my plan was to pursue a career in either healthcare or the medical field for as I come from a family of people in academia or medicine, it seemed the natural thing to do. I have a degree in Sociology and Pharmacy from the University of Saskatchewan, Canada.

After graduating, I worked in various community and hospital pharmacy settings. I quite quickly became a manager of an extremely busy medical clinic pharmacy and acquired most of my managerial training 'on the job'. It was a steep learning curve but I seemed to thrive in the environment.

Throughout this time I developed my medical and pharmaceutical writing portfolio contributing to journals and magazines. I also sat on numerous committees, served as an expert review and award appraiser and sat on the Editorial Advisory board of the *Pharmacy Practice* journal. I have presented at various conferences and taught students at university level. I managed to keep up with some of my roles after my move to the UK but this became extremely challenging with the time difference and not everything could be done virtually.

We visit my family in Canada at least annually and they often visit us here.

My husband Pradeep is a dentist, so I moved into dentistry by default. We had

is endless and you must push boundaries and be adventurous. I am probably one of the few people who was a dental practice manager first and dental nurse second. I had thought that it was mandatory to have some dental foundation before managing dental practices so I took the National Certificate in Dental Nursing and enjoyed the course.

As well as the Lister House Dental Clinic on London's Wimpole Street, we have a practice in Buckinghamshire. At any one time I am responsible for the dental team members at both practices.

I simply enjoy what I do. I have a wide array of dental roles and each one is equally as important as the other. All the work I do is fairly demanding; hectic would be an understatement but I truly take great pride in all that I do. Life has an abundance of opportunities; you just need to have the courage and perseverance to take on new challenges and always seek to create a better version of yourself.

After work I do my best to try to collect the children from school and this indeed is the best part of my day. We often share some very interesting stories on the way home along with an abundance of laughter. My evenings are devoted to the family and I truly cherish my time with them. Often the evening requires one last proofread of a document or dealing with other work related matters which I often do once the children have gone to bed.

Dinner is always with the family. We get to share the adventures we each had on any given day ... it also helps plan for the next day.

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I have been very lucky to have had the most interesting and rewarding roles. I served as a medical information consultant for a province in Canada. This role was extremely interesting. I would receive requests for anything medication related; the questions were always diverse and were the ones that really did not have any answers. I spent hours researching and liaising with various health professionals nationally and globally to come to a succinct evidence-based robust answer. I was mindful of the fact that my recommendation would determine the treatment in a patient. The types of questions were wide-ranging: what to administer to a patient where many of the medications were contraindicated, the safety of various medicines in pregnancy and lactation, complicated medical histories, adverse effects, drug interactions and so forth.

Armed with this knowledge I then became the Coordinator for the Canadian Adverse Drug Reactions Monitoring Programme (Health Canada) in our province. This was a very challenging role addressing potential adverse effects which have not been reported: essentially the pharmacovigilance of medications on the Canadian market.

bought two dental practices simultaneously and I had offered to help out initially ... ten years later I am still here not because I have to but because I absolutely love what I am doing.

I was very keen on pursuing pharmacy in England. However, initially when I enquired with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society I was informed that the path for registration in the UK would be long and a bit complicated, rather surprising as I graduated from Canada. At this stage I decided it was time for a career change and began looking at other avenues. Surprisingly I am still able to utilise many of the skills from being a pharmacist in the dental world. I also have an ever expanding writing portfolio in the field of dentistry contributing to various publications such as *BDJ Team*,¹⁻³ *Dentistry* and *Dental Nursing*. I am very passionate about writing and feel it is important to contribute.

I have also taken on a role to write and review policies for a medical and dental compliance company, and recently I have become an examiner for the National Examining Board for Dental Nurses (NEBDN).

The potential of a career in dental nursing

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Interview by Kate Quinlan

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