

BDJ

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[**inside**view]



UNIVERSITY OF
PLYMOUTH
Peninsula Dental School

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KEEPING DENTAL PROFESSIONALS AHEAD IN CHANGING TIMES

A conversation with **TIMOTHY O'BRIEN**, Clinical Associate Professor in Restorative Dentistry (Education) and Programme Lead in Periodontology, Peninsula Dental School at the University of Plymouth



Peninsula Dental School (PDS) provides undergraduate, postgraduate and continuing professional development courses in dentistry. The school, based in the historic port town of Plymouth, in the southwest of England, aims to equip its students with the tools to keep up to date with the challenges and developments of evidence-based dentistry.

What kinds of courses do you offer?

We offer a wide range of taught courses within the dental school, including research skills, health service leadership and management. We have two full-time undergraduate courses in dental surgery and dental therapy & hygiene, and three part-time master's courses. The MSc in restorative dentistry has been running the longest and is the most popular, although the two other MScs — in minor oral surgery and periodontology — are filling up fast. We also have a programme of continuing professional development activities.

Our postgraduate courses are clinically focused, and we have a wide range of participants, from general dentists, through specialist trainees, to university clinical academics looking to progress their careers. As well as providing a theoretical framework, and the skills needed to access and evaluate the most up-to-date literature, the courses also give students the opportunity to practice selected skills under expert tutelage in the 'phantom head' facilities, on mannequin heads. Students can also get advice and support from specialists and consultants when treating patients in their own practice.

Why is continuing professional development important for dental practitioners?

The area in which we work is changing. Our patients' needs are becoming more complicated, and there are plans to change the way dental teams work. This will mean that hygienists and therapists will be able to provide more routine care, leaving dentists to use their expertise for more complex treatment and cases.

More and more practitioners are providing care outside of the NHS. These individuals will need to be able to provide a high standard of care to patients who are increasingly aware of the choices that they have open to them, and who may expect more from their treatment.

Also, dental care itself is changing rapidly, as the use of evidence-based care increases and cutting-edge technologies are introduced. Dentists need to keep up to date with developments. This is particularly important as the past is littered with ideas that were going to 'revolutionize' dentistry, but failed to live up to expectations.

One of the main advantages to undertaking a Master's level course is that students develop skills in researching and appraising new techniques which will last them for the rest of their career. Material taught on a course can date rapidly, but practitioners with the skills

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to be able to research and appraise the new approaches can continue to provide current, effective and reliable care for their patients, throughout their professional lives.

What makes Plymouth different to other dental schools?

Our enthusiasm for teaching, our interest in providing the best education that we can for our students, and our many years of clinical experience is what makes us distinctive. This is reflected in the quality of our students, and in our achievement in the national league tables. We were pleased to see that our most recent cohort of graduates gave us a 100% score for student satisfaction, giving us the joint top position in the National Student Survey.

What is the primary piece of advice you would offer to a dental practitioner looking to update or extend their skills?

The future is all about quality and not just quantity of care, when viewed from the individual practitioner's point of view. Practitioners need to ensure that any courses they do are at an appropriate level, which is usually level 7 — or

Master's. They also need to find a course that enrolls a relatively small number of participants, in order to ensure the best interaction between students and staff during teaching. Don't be one of a huge crowd.

In my personal experience, dentists make better progress after taking a long, structured course of study rather than a lot of short courses, as the longer-term teaching adds progressive 'layers' to their abilities.

Why is the Award of Accreditation from the Royal College of Surgeons in England important?

In January 2018 we received accreditation for our postgraduate education programmes aimed at general dentists. This is recognition that our courses have achieved the standards set by one of the most respected independent bodies in medical education. This validates the quality of our teaching, our support for students, and our achievements, and means that our students can be sure that it's not just us who think our courses are great!



SEARCHING FOR CAREER ENHANCEMENT?

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www.plymouth.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/msc-periodontology

Minor Oral Surgery

www.plymouth.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/msc-minor-oral-surgery



Recent holders of the Diploma in Restorative Dentistry from the Faculty of General Dental Practice (UK) can apply now for the Accelerated "Top-up" MSc in Restorative Dentistry. (Entry in November 2018).

NEW! To celebrate the 10 year anniversary and continuing success of the school we are proud to offer our Alumni a discounted rate of up to 20% for postgraduate study.

For details, see:
www.plymouth.ac.uk/alumni-friends/alumni/benefits-and-services/discounts

Are you an NHS practitioner in the South-West? If so, you may be eligible for a Health Education England bursary towards the cost of your fees. Please contact us for details.

There are a limited number of bursaries available, so please apply early.

Peninsula Dental School University of Plymouth is accredited by



Royal College of Surgeons
ADVANCING SURGICAL CARE

“ The ethos of the Peninsula course has been refreshing and innovative. It is primarily a patient centred course and I can take what I learn and apply it the next day in a clinical setting. I essentially wanted a restorative course that my patients would immediately benefit from. The ready access of excellent and friendly specialists to clarify learning points has been invaluable. To sum it up, it has reignited my passion about studying and dentistry, and it has been the best decision I have made on a professional level. ”

Andrew Harris

BDS MSc DPDS MFDS RCPS (Glasg) MFGDP, AFHEA, MAcadMED
Lecturer and former Restorative Dentistry Student.

FIND OUT MORE:

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