

rather than just treating, and stabilising the disease. Preventing caries is less invasive, and less expensive than treating it and in turn help their patients avoid painful and costly procedures such as restorations, root canals and extractions. Prevention also focuses on the promotion of good oral health habits and behaviours, such as effective brushing technique, interdental cleaning, and healthy eating habits. This contributes to the overall positive impact of health and wellbeing of their patients. It is sometimes easy to get caught up in the treatment of patients on clinic, however it is important not to overlook preventive measures as well.

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Getting to know you

- *Cats or dogs?* Cats
- *Favourite ice cream?* Mango sorbet
- *Guilty pleasure TV show?* Peep Show
- *Does pineapple belong on pizza?* Definitely not
- *You want to become a dentist because...* Of the ability to transform a person's smile and the impact it can have on their self esteem.



Trust yourself

*Hira Chaudhry,
University of Glasgow*

Dear dental student,

Trust yourself. When you fail or struggle, you are hasty to label yourself as belonging to the wrong place. Many of our colleagues' experience imposter syndrome, burnout and poor mental health throughout dental school due to harmful constant comparison. What's imperative to remember is dentistry is a career of life-long learning. When we first learn, no one is perfect.

But I know it's easy to throw motivational quotes in your face and never divulge into the deeper issues. You are witnessing the inevitable and ongoing crisis of NHS dentistry. Leaving the protected haven of dental school (where we don't even count the cost of materials!) to budget cuts, reform and widening oral health inequalities is frankly, terrifying. The impact of COVID-19 exacerbated these problems, with 30% of people in the UK finding it difficult to access a dentist.¹ The pressure of ensuring the public have equal access to oral healthcare is now a daunting task. But the NHS has always had significant challenges. Will there be reform, or will the NHS even exist in thirty years? Only time will tell.

Time did introduce an era of 'dent-influencers' and sparkling smile makeovers. Scrolling constantly through glitzy and glamorous dental feeds only encourages comparison, damaging self-esteem. Behind the perfect aesthetic dentistry perceived are years of training, specialisation and mistakes. Surrounded by constant perfectionism, one forgets to 'err is to human' – it's only human to make errors as students as long as we learn from them.

However, refreshingly social media has been utilised to break stigmas and tackle taboo topics previously ignored by society. Universities, magazines and health professionals are doing more to educate and listen regarding inequalities in diversity and equality. Dentists are breaking down the barriers of mental health by encouraging people that it's normal to talk to someone when they are struggling. We are slowly but surely making steps in the right direction.

Similarly, through webinars, exhibitions and societies exists an exciting,

interconnected student network. The BDSA is our student body that hosts events such as sports days, conferences and committee meetings which strive to connect dental students together. For the first time in February 2023, Manchester Undergraduate Dental Research Conference had student representation from every dental school! Through networking with one another we realise we aren't alone. 'I literally went through the same thing' is comfortingly heard when discussing tough and embarrassing dental school experiences.

Ultimately, what the previous years have taught us is we have no control over the evolving world. What you do have control over is yourself. Have the confidence to attend events, webinars and educate yourself throughout dental school. Thrive without prejudice. You are not generation snowflake but generation resilience. Despite a global pandemic, befuddled NHS dentistry and economic recession you kept going. The world may or may not be a different place when you graduate but have the courage to persevere and forge a place for yourself.

Sincerely,

Your fellow dental student.

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Getting to know you

- *Cats or dogs?* Really hard to decide but I would say cats!
- *Favourite ice cream?* Stracciatella – an Italian gelato that originates from Bergamo in Northern Italy
- *Guilty pleasure TV show?* I could binge watch Modern Family all day, everyday.
- *Does pineapple belong on pizza?* I think pineapple belongs on everything but pizza...
- *You want to become a dentist because...* It is a profession where we are extremely lucky enough to encounter people from different backgrounds and ages daily, working with our patients with one common goal - to improve their oral health. I love how it's a career of life-long learning which combines helping people.