



***‘As a dental nurse,
I love making a
difference to people’***

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Emma Lawrence, 25, from Gloucestershire, is a dental nurse at Arnica Dental Care in Cheltenham and was recently awarded the BDA Education Outstanding Oral Health Education student of 2018, for gaining the top marks in her oral health education course.

Career choices

I had no idea what I wanted to do at school as I’m sure many people don’t at that age. Until you get into the outside world and start experiencing different things, I don’t know if most people actually know what appeals to them and what they want to do with their life.

Initially I worked within the retail industry. I loved working directly with the public so knew I needed a job that helped and worked directly with people. I decided to go into dental nursing as I thought it would give me more long term career progression.

As a dental nurse, I love helping and making a difference to people – especially giving them more confidence – I find it really rewarding. Although you do similar treatments on a day to day basis, every day is still always slightly different so you never get bored.

I studied for the City & Guilds level 3 Diploma in Dental Nursing. Some of it was done at work and some was at home so you really had to find a good work/life balance - making sure you had enough time to study, yet also some time for yourself. I find it much easier to learn something when you are

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physically doing it so it was helpful doing the course while I was actually working in the setting rather than just reading from a text book.

OHE

I wanted to continue expanding my knowledge, so I decided to sign up for the BDA’s qualification in oral health education (OHE). Everything you learn by doing the OHE qualification is essential knowledge when working in the dental industry.

The course consisted of online webinars initially, a practical element of holding six

OHE sessions with patients, some coursework to aid you during your OHE sessions, and lastly a final exam which was done at home. I really liked the aspect of doing the exam at home because you were in an environment where you were comfortable and relaxed, and it was nice to sit and have a cup of tea whilst doing it which you wouldn’t do if you were in an examination hall somewhere!

The course enabled me to expand my knowledge and gain more confidence working solely and interacting with patients on a one to one basis. You also receive lots of support from tutors throughout the duration of the



Emma receiving her award at the BDA Honours and Awards ceremony

course so you never feel like you are on your own.

Since being fully qualified, I have taken regular oral health education sessions at my previous practice with patients (both adults and children) where I demonstrated and discussed their oral health.



Emma supporting National Smile Month with colleagues

‘I think it completely makes the workplace if you enjoy who you are working with and if you all work well together as a team and support each other.’

It was a lovely surprise to hear that I had got the best mark in the OHE exam! I didn't even know the BDA Honours and Awards existed before I got the email. I was absolutely honoured and proud that I had achieved this. I attended the awards ceremony, which was held at the BDA headquarters in London on 2 May. I had never been to anything like that before and I didn't know what to expect so I was quite nervous initially. But it was an absolute honour and lovely to meet loads of other wonderful dental care professionals and listen to their experiences and achievements in the world of dentistry.

Oral health

Obviously as my knowledge has grown I have altered my oral hygiene regime and diet habits. I think you have to practise what you preach, so I am careful about how much sugar I consume. I'll be the first to admit I

had too much sugar in my tea before I became a dental nurse! But this was all due to not having sufficient knowledge regarding sugar and decay. If I had the option to go and see an oral health educator when I was younger, maybe my habits would have changed sooner,

I love working within the medical sector and helping people and I find it really interesting being part of the dental industry. I consider the dental nurses I have worked with as my closest friends. I think it completely makes the workplace if you enjoy who you are working with and if you all work well together as a team and support each other.

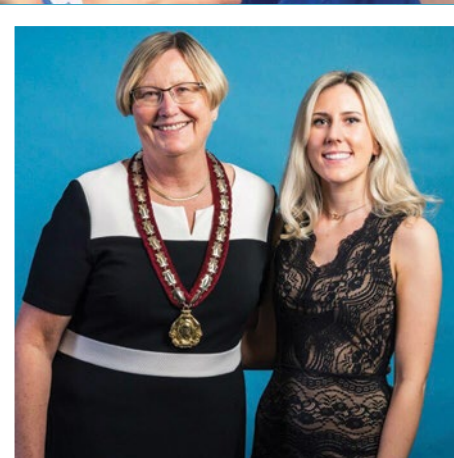
Outside dentistry, I really enjoy travelling and visiting new countries; my most recent holidays have consisted of Rome, Japan and Prague. I also like going out socialising with

which is why I think it's great that a lot of dental practices now offer an OHE service.

As tooth decay is almost always preventable, there is absolutely no need for young patients to have decay, yet is it still very common. Therefore, it is essential patients establish and encourage good diet/brushing habits at an early age.

What next?

I'm currently in the process of training in sedation and I'm due to go on a course at the end of this month so I'm looking forward to doing something different. It's rewarding knowing you are comforting the patient and giving them that option [sedation] to enable them to have the treatment they need. I always want to improve and expand my knowledge, so I'd definitely consider training in radiography and implants in the future as well.



friends and having dinner at local restaurants.

I've recently got engaged to my partner of seven years, Ben, so we have a busy time of wedding planning ahead of us!

Further information

For more information on the BDA Education Certificate in Oral Health Education, visit <https://cpd.bda.org/course/info.php?id=233>.

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