

Is normality calling?



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Julie Deverick¹ says that there a few things dental hygienists and therapists can be doing to make the transition back to work a little smoother.

Following several months of self-isolation and social distancing, many of us are eagerly looking forward to returning to something that resembles ‘normal’ life. Of course, we could be a little way off that, but even the prospect of beginning to see some routine patients again in practice is a light at the end of the tunnel for many dental hygienists and dental therapists.

It’s not going to be easy, but the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (BSDHT) is here to provide any help and support that we can. In preparation for the gradual return to practice, there are a few things we can be doing to make the transition a little smoother.

Get the paperwork in order

However you chose to spend the time you would normally have been in practice over

Author information

¹BSDHT President Julie has over 30 years of experience as a dental hygienist, during which time she has also gained skills in teaching, management and administration which help her in her BSDHT role. Julie continues to work in practice so she understands some of the frustrations and limitations of the job which is why she is keen to continue supporting members of BSDHT by working with the Executive Committee and others, to break the barriers that confine dental hygienists and dental therapists in the workplace.



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or email to get up-to-date with what they're thinking and how they plan to approach the opening will give you the information you need to prepare yourself. Don't be afraid to ask questions, share any concerns or offer your own ideas to help the process.

It is just as important to speak to your team members – they will likely have similar queries to you and having the support of friends and colleagues will be invaluable as we all readjust to the new way of things.

Re-engage with patients

Many dental hygienists and dental therapists have no doubt stayed in touch with their patients through innovative platforms like social media. Whether you have or not, it's vital to start re-engaging with your patients in the lead up to your practice(s) opening again. You may need to communicate with them how you will be operating when you come back – perhaps focusing on those with most need, or you may be offering limited appointment slots initially. It is also beneficial to remind patients of the importance of their dental health and to encourage them to

Also in preparation for re-opening, you may wish to conduct a stock take. If you donated personal protective equipment (PPE) to local healthcare teams, for example, you will need to source new products. You will also need to check dates of existing products and make a list of anything that needs replacing or adding to.

Contact your suppliers

At this point, it will be beneficial to catch up with your preferred suppliers, if you deal with them directly. You can ascertain what stock they have available and plan accordingly. They may also be able to help in other ways. For instance, they could be offering marketing support for their customers or they could suggest new materials to streamline your daily routines for a more efficient return to work.

Here to help

It is crucial to have a network around you for support and guidance. That's what the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (BSDHT) is – a community of dental hygienists and dental therapists who share a

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the past few months, it is likely that you had and continue to have a few extra hours on your hands. Use these to make sure all your indemnities, insurances, CPD and qualifications are in order. You might need to check renewal dates or determine whether you need to notify anyone when you go back to 'normal' work. If you've used any downtime to brush up on CPD topics, ensure that all the necessary certificates are recorded where they should be. This all just gives you one less thing to do when your practice(s) start to reopen, enabling you to focus on your patients and adjusting to any new protocols introduced.

Stay in the loop

It's important to stay in contact with your principal(s) when they start to think about re-opening the practice(s). A simple phone call

book in for any routine check-ups, hygiene appointments or treatment reviews that they may have postponed in recent months. You may be able to collaborate with any communication managed directly by the practice.

Check your equipment and your stock

Before returning to work after several months away, it is vital to check equipment thoroughly and follow the guidance before turning anything on. This is especially important for equipment that utilises water – unit water lines, sterilisers, ultrasonic baths and, even though they may not be used initially, ultrasonic scalers and air/powder devices. Don't forget about the risk of Legionnaires' Disease after the water systems have not been run for a significant period of time.

passion for clinical excellence and the highest quality of patient care. With professionals at different stages in their careers, as well as those who focus on different areas of the profession, there is always someone to turn to for help or advice. Plus, as a Society, we work hard to communicate with our members and give them the information they need.

While normal life is calling, it may be some time yet before we get back to how things were. The transition period will require us all to adapt and adjust the way we work, but together, we can get back to doing the job we love.

For more information about the BSDHT, visit www.bsdt.org.uk, call 01788 575050 or email enquiries@bsdt.org.uk.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41407-020-0342-9>