



‘I feel touched  
that patients  
know my name’

**Megan Viney, 26**, is a dental nurse with extended duties in oral health education and dental radiography/a trainee practice manager, working at Glansevern Periodontal Centre, Welshpool, Powys, Mid Wales. Megan also has extensive experience using her dental skills on volunteering trips abroad.

**T**hree times a week I go to a gym class before work so get up at around 5.45 am. Otherwise on weekdays I get up around 6.30 am. Of a weekend I try to have a small lie-in and wake up around 8.00 am.

I was born and raised in Birmingham and lived there for almost 22 years before moving to Mid Wales. I have really settled in Wales and would now class Welshpool as my ‘hometown’, which surprises me as I always thought I would stay city-bound.

I have been married for three years to my wonderful husband, who happened to be my best friend for over ten years before we decided to start dating and get married.

I always try to start my day with breakfast. During the working week it is normally something quick and easy to make and eat at home such as muesli with yoghurt, home-made fruit and nut granola with yoghurt, or porridge with fruit, seeds and spices. However, if I am in a rush and need to leave for work, I make a home-made smoothie with added seeds/nuts and oats.

When I am off work or at weekends, I tend to go a little ‘fancier’ as I do love taking the time to make and cook breakfast and enjoy the morning. What I make can be anything from almond pancakes topped with fruit and yoghurt; to smashed avocado on a bagel; to hummus, rocket and poached egg on toast; and occasionally as a treat for my husband - a full English breakfast!

I live a 10-minute drive away from my workplace at Glansevern Periodontal Centre. I moved from Birmingham for my job and if I hadn't, I would have had an hour and a half commute!

I drive to work. I live too far out from my workplace to practically walk to work and the country roads on my way to work are a little too busy and narrow for me to feel comfortable cycling. Public transport isn't available for the hours I work, which are 8.30 am - 5.30 pm, Monday to Friday.

As I am the only nurse within the team and organisation, my duties are split between clinic and admin which keeps the day interesting.

At 8.30 am I set up the clinical/surgery area for the day ready to start at 9 am. Then throughout the day I will be nursing, carrying out decontamination duties and reception work.

During my working day, I also have opportunities to carry out one-to-one oral health education with patients. On days when our periodontist is in, I get to take the x-rays as prescribed by him. I appreciate and enjoy that I get to use my post-qualification certificates in my day-to-day work.

At 5 pm I begin to close down the clinical/surgery area ready to leave at 5.30 pm.

I also find time within the day to carry out practice management duties such as ordering, dealing with invoices and statements, and helping to ensure that the practice remains compliant and up-to-date.

Occasionally I have dedicated admin days which I love as I can wholly focus on the management side of things without being distracted.

I enjoy the variety within my job and duties.

I feel it's important to mention that I was homeschooled all my life, from primary school right through to when I finished at 16. When I left homeschooling, I finished with no qualifications or GCSEs. My original plan was to enrol on a course and gain my GCSEs to then progress on to a course to begin on whatever career path I felt I wanted to pursue.

I was around 14/15-years-old when I began on my own orthodontic journey. I became fascinated by how orthodontics worked in moving teeth and the role of the dental professional. I was captivated by how hands-on and involved the dental nurse was who was assisting the orthodontist. This is when I began researching the dental profession, career opportunities in dentistry, and how you could progress through the varying roles.

I started to look at where I could study the

course, mainly to find out what qualifications I would first need to gain to be considered.

A local college in Birmingham, Matthew Boulton College, was offering the dental nursing course and I saw they had an open day coming up. I convinced my Mother to take me and so along we went.

English assessment to ensure I could keep up with the course (which I passed, and then took additional functional skills alongside my dental nursing diploma to make up for my lack of GCSEs). Secondly, that I could find a workplace where I could carry out the dental nursing apprenticeship practical training.



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That day changed my life. We went to the College Open Day to enquire about getting my GCSEs for me to then progress on to the dental nursing course, but, I was unable to do my GCSEs at the college as they were only for resits. During that visit to the College, I met the head of the dental department who encouraged me to fill out an application form for the dental nursing course to 'see what happens'.

I nervously but excitedly filled out the form. I think both my Mum and I thought nothing would come of it and I would need to try somewhere else to study for my GCSEs.

A few weeks later I received a letter in the post inviting me for an interview with the tutors of the course at Matthew Boulton College. I was ecstatic! I eagerly attended the interview and a place was offered to me on the course following two conditions being met, one, that as I had no qualifications, I had to pass a Maths and

I applied to every dental practice within the area that I could get to, either by walking or public transportation. Out of all of the dental practices I applied to, only two came back offering me an interview. As a matter of fact, I never made it to the second interview.

Following my first ever job interview, I was offered a training position within a wonderful practice in Birmingham, which was owned by a husband and wife. My position as trainee dental nurse was originally only provisional for the time of my apprenticeship to provide cover whilst another nurse was on maternity leave. However, I ended up staying there for seven years until I left for a new job in Mid Wales. My first practice in Birmingham was the best experience and work-based setting I could have asked for to begin my career in dentistry.

I gained a wide level of experience in general nursing, orthodontic nursing, implant



nursing, hygiene nursing, and reception and administration duties. They also put me forward for my extended duties qualifications and encouraged me to grow and develop in the dental profession.

I am honestly so grateful to that practice and my previous employers for taking a chance and giving an inexperienced, unqualified, young teenager the opportunity to pursue a career in dentistry. Without them, I wouldn't have been able to start the course at Matthew Boulton and begin developing my career and future. That practice and its owners helped nurture me into the dental nurse I am today.

### Volunteering

I have also been able to use my dental nursing skills to carry out volunteer work in both Africa and Romania, which isn't something I first thought about when joining the profession, but have discovered and enjoy the most.

In May 2016 I took my first dental volunteer trip with Bridge2Aid to Bukoba, Tanzania and spent two weeks on their programme helping to train Clinical Officers in emergency dental treatment, oral health education and cross infection control. It was during this trip that I met my now boss, Yvonne Wood. We kept in touch following this trip and eventually I ended up working with her.

In January 2017 I went with Bridge2Aid again, this time to Arusha, Tanzania, to volunteer on their Regional Dental Officer (RDO) programme where we trained the RDOs to train the Clinical Officers. Then in July 2017 I went to a small village in Romania called Bod, with Operation Mobilisation, to carry out a Missionary Dental Volunteer Programme (alongside a Medical Programme). We provided a free dental service and oral health education to the community within the village at a local church.

In July 2018 I moved to Mid Wales to work at Glansevern Periodontal Centre. Between 2018 and 2021 as a practice we have provided oral health education talks to local primary schools, Rotary Clubs and the Women's Institute.

In April 2019 I was involved in forming a project with Bridge2Aid where we went to Arusha, Tanzania, to pilot a dedicated oral health promotion programme to Tanzanian dental therapists, providing an update in the latest thinking and research, equipping the therapists to be able to go out into their own community to promote the importance of good oral health.

Most recently, in August 2021 I took part in another opportunity with Bridge2Aid and Smileawi, to make oral health education training digital. This was piloted in Malawi to provide an update to Malawian dental professionals.

### Saving teeth

September 2021 marked ten years of me being in the dental profession.

I find my job role very rewarding because when people come to see us they think they are beyond help and are going to lose their teeth. We strive to change that and provide our patients with gold-standard periodontal care, where possible trying to save teeth.

The patients we see are very unique and loyal to our practice. They tell us that the experience and approach to care at Glansevern is different to what they have experienced before. We pride ourselves on a specific team approach and patients are aware of this. I feel

collaboration from their input at home with striving to achieve good oral health on a daily basis.

Seeing how patients' lives have been turned around and their new found confidence makes me remember why I love my job and I am in the dental profession.

The practice owner is Yvonne Wood, an experienced and passionate dental hygienist with over 30 years' experience as a hygienist, but who has been in the dental profession even longer. Yvonne sees patients under direct access and referral. Yvonne also carries out all of the non-surgical periodontal therapy within the practice.

We also work with Dr Devan Raindi, a Periodontal Specialist. Devan works at multiple dental practices as a periodontist, including Glansevern. Devan receives referrals in from other dental organisations in the region around the practice, which goes as far as 50 miles away in Aberystwyth to a little closer on the

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very touched that patients know my name, remember things about me, and it is a privilege to be told that I am caring and supportive towards their treatment and oral health.

The most rewarding part is seeing patients' joyous reactions following a course of non-surgical periodontal therapy and the amazing results achieved, which is due to the

other side in Shrewsbury. Devan carries out the surgical periodontal procedures, which includes gingival grafts, pocket reduction surgery and bone regeneration.

I feel very fortunate to be a part of such an experienced and dedicated periodontal team, aiming to provide gold-standard care to all patients.

We see a lot of patients with advanced periodontal disease, who require more time and expertise. We receive referrals from dentists for patients who are in their mid-thirties up to late eighties with severe periodontal disease and loose teeth, to see if we can assist them in saving as many teeth as possible. We achieve outstanding results with our periodontal treatment.

Yvonne also has a lot of experience with dental implants. She assists patients in maintaining their dental implants and tries to save implants which are failing. Because of this, we do see a lot of patients with difficult mouths to maintain/clean due to complex restorative needs.

We also see a handful of children and teenagers at the practice. Their parents are very keen for them to learn good oral hygiene techniques and habits from a young age to prevent dental problems.

extra protocols we have to follow to ensure both our safety and that of our patients.

We are also very fortunate in that we have become busier than ever in the request and uptake of periodontal and hygiene appointments. I think since the pandemic and people being unable to access a dentist for a period of time, and in some cases now struggling to get an appointment with a dentist, people are becoming aware of the need to take control of, and maintain their oral health to avoid unnecessary problems and toothache.

The pandemic itself and the new working regulations did not make me consider leaving dentistry, but lockdown and furlough did. During my four months at home due to lockdown, I fell in love with being a housewife. I found joy in maintaining my home and the day-to-day tasks that came with that. I obviously returned to work once

Living in Mid Wales we have some amazing places to explore, walk and hike around. I live a 15-minute walk away from a National Trust property - Powys Castle - and a short drive away from a stunning lake and waterfall, Lake Vyrnwy. These are my favourite and go-to places when family/friends visit, but there are many more places to explore with stunning scenery.

In July 2019 I started to learn to crochet and this became a big hobby of mine during the lockdown. I made a 6-foot lockdown crochet blanket for my husband! My favourite things to crochet are baby booties and clothing to gift to friends and family.

Saturdays vary depending upon what's happening. There are occasions where I go back to Birmingham to see my family or friends, or go up to North Wales which is where my husband's family and friends live to see them. If the weather is nice we sometimes plan to go for a day out exploring, especially if friends/family come to visit, or we go shopping in the nearest town. I like to be very sociable and use my weekends to see people, but I also try to be mindful and balance out my social life with also time to relax, staying home, and spending quality time with my husband.

Sundays are always reserved for attending my local church with my husband.

Currently as I am studying for my Leadership and Management course any weekends I am free, I use it to focus, study and complete my assignments. I find I can concentrate better compared to trying to do it after work of an evening.

Since being in the dental profession I definitely have gained more of an awareness of what I eat and drink, my oral health and my overall general health. Where able, I educate and advise my family and friends on the importance of maintaining good oral health and being careful with their diet from a caries point of view. When I one day have my own family, I hope to instil good habits within them too.

On a weekday I go to bed between 9-10 pm. On a weekend I may be able to push it to 11 pm; however, I am a huge lover of sleep and so the earlier I can go to bed, the better in my opinion!

**Interview by Kate Quinlan**

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*'We receive referrals for patients who are in their mid-thirties up to late eighties with severe disease. I feel very fortunate to be part of such an experienced periodontal team.'*

### The pandemic

As a private periodontal/hygienist direct access practice we obviously had to close when the first lockdown happened as we were unable to operate due the restrictions put on dentistry within Wales.

Thankfully I was put on furlough for the duration of our lockdown, and so my personal bills and expenses could still be covered - I will admit this was a worry for me at the very beginning. I was on furlough for four months before the practice could re-open and start treating patients again.

To begin with, we could only see patients who were 'essential' and it was restricted to non-AGP appointments only. To then use our aerosol equipment we had to write to Healthcare Inspectorate in Wales (HIW) to let them know; order our AGP PPE and be fit checked for the FFP3 masks; and manage the diary to allow enough fallow time between patients. The working day has definitely become mentally more draining due to the

we as an organisation were able to operate again and I am very happy continuing in current/post-pandemic dentistry. Lockdown gave me a taster for what it could potentially be like though if I ever did leave the dental profession, and for that I am very grateful and it is a time I will cherish.

Glansevern is a wonderful, supportive place to work, and very beautiful! The dental practice is located within a courtyard setting, attached to a hall, and surrounded by gorgeous gardens and a beautiful lake. It is always so stunning and peaceful coming to and leaving work every day.

Three times a week I usually finish work and head straight to a gym class, so I don't get home until just after 7 pm. It may seem late after a long, busy day at work, but by going to a Spinning or Kettlecise class straight from work, it provides 45-60 minutes of me time. I find that I just forget about the working day and I am much more relaxed when I get home.