



A week in the life of a hospital-based dental nurse

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After leaving school in 2013, I undertook an apprenticeship at Royal Preston Hospital in pathology. I gained a BTEC and diploma in biochemistry and laboratory techniques, and was quickly offered a job in the pre-analytics department in 2015. As much as I enjoyed the experience, I felt that the job wasn't quite right for me and I was keen to pursue a career where I would find more opportunity for development.

In 2015, I successfully applied for a student dental nursing position at the Royal Albert Edward Infirmary in Wigan, based mainly in oral surgery and orthodontic departments, and some placements out in general practice. During this two-year post, I obtained my qualification in dental nursing, and my hospital maxillofacial certificate. After qualifying, I accepted a full-time permanent position as a dental nurse on the same department. Since then I have gained qualifications in sedation nursing, impression taking and orthodontic nursing. Orthodontics is my area of keen interest, and I am excited to start my orthodontic therapy training later this year.

One of the best aspects of working in a hospital is the variety of experience available. No two days are the same, and throughout the week I work across a wide range of clinics, with different clinicians and treating different types of patients.

Monday

I work with a consultant or specialist orthodontist all day, mainly assessing new patients for orthodontic treatment.

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Some patients require investigations and preparatory work such as new impressions, surgical hook placement, and taking a cephalometric analysis.

Once a month, a joint clinic is held with both a consultant orthodontist and maxillofacial surgeon, to assess more complex orthognathic patients that require surgery.

Tuesday

As I work until 6 pm every day, I have a day off in the week. This also serves as study and admin time if needed.

I love spending my day off walking my dog Marley in between studying and catching up with friends. I love travelling and using my annual leave to explore the world when I can. I have lots of holidays planned this summer, due to some being postponed because of the pandemic, which is very exciting. I also have a big trip to Las Vegas planned for next month!

I have recently reserved my first home which is due for completion at the end of the year. I can't wait to start the next chapter of my life in my new home!

Wednesday

AM:

I assist University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) students who carry out oral surgery cases under local anaesthetic (LA). This involves general dental nursing duties such as aspirating and managing the surgical instruments and tray.

PM:

I work with the oral surgery consultant on the Facial Pain Clinic, carrying out consultations either face-to-face or over the telephone. I organise patients' notes and paperwork, including outcome sheets and listing proformas, in order to ensure that patients have appropriate follow-up.

Thursday

AM:

We run an inhalation sedation list to carry out extractions on children. My tasks

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involve fitting children with nose masks, administering the nitrous oxide and oxygen gases, patient management throughout the procedure, monitoring of oxygen saturation, and issuing the parent with post-operative instructions. A second nurse is also needed on these clinics to assist the oral surgeon with the extraction procedure itself.

PM:

In the afternoon, adult patients are treated under IV sedation with Midazolam. I assist the oral surgeon with cannulation, patient monitoring, record-keeping, patient recovery and issuing post-operative instructions to the escort. Again a second nurse is present to assist with the surgical procedures. All staff in the room are ILS (immediate life support) trained, in order to be able to respond to a medical emergency.

Friday

AM:

On Friday mornings, there is usually a GA (general anaesthetic) list for paediatric or adult patients. I join the oral surgeon early in the morning to clerk patients in on the ward. During the surgery, I scrub in alongside

another dental nurse either to aspirate or manage the surgical tray.

PM:

In the afternoon I work with the orthodontic therapist, carrying out a treatment list and assisting in fixed, functional and removable appliances.

Saturday/Sunday

Due to the backlog of patients awaiting elective procedures in the hospital, which has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the department runs a waiting list initiative for carrying out procedures under LA or GA. We are offered the opportunity to work overtime and treat patients on the weekend to help reduce the waiting list.

In between treating patients, we are also required to assist with general tidying, stocking, and taking instruments to sterilisation for decontamination off site. Other colleagues who have training are also tasked with responsibilities such as oral health education, suture removal, and acclimatisation appointments for paediatric patients.

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