



HOW TO DEVELOP YOUR CAREER IN DENTAL NURSING

Helen Nield, Head of Library & Knowledge Services at the British Dental Association (BDA), introduces a new book by Janine Brooks and Fiona Ellwood.

‘Although Sheila had always known that she wanted to be a dentist’s assistant when she grew up, even she had no idea of the detailed training that was necessary before she could take her place beside the dental chair.’

No, this is not a quote from the new book by Brooks and Ellwood but from the Bodley Head Career Book for girls, ‘Sheila Burton: Dental Assistant’ which was published in 1956. It follows the fictional Sheila as she studies at a dental hospital in London and experiences life as a fully-fledged professional after completing her training. Dental nursing is often seen as an adjunct role and not a profession in its own right but, despite the changes in the job title over the years, this example shows that it has been considered a profession of choice much longer than we might think.

As I helped provide some information to the authors for this publication, I have been looking forward to seeing it. It is unusual in being focused solely on dental nursing, and as the initial chapter explains, its ‘history, current position and possible futures’. This introduction is followed by the longest chapter in the book covering the history of dental nursing. Both authors felt it was of paramount importance to show where the profession began and how the role of chairside assistant developed to what it has become today. The role of the dental nurse is also looked at against the background of the role of women in society and their acceptance in the professional workplace. Dental nursing is still overwhelmingly a profession of women but maybe in the future as job roles in society become less gender riven more men will embark on the career of dental nurse.

Chapter 3 broadens the scope of the

publication by briefly exploring the rise of dental nursing in various countries around the world. This is succeeded by a chapter which covers training and qualifications for dental nurses in the UK – still setting current opportunities against those of the past. Chapter 5 explores actual career development highlighting the various avenues now available for those working in dental nursing: roles in education and administration, lead roles such as ‘mental health lead’ or ‘infection prevention lead’, roles in regulation or hospital and secondary care. It also explores the importance of self-knowledge and reflection when creating individual career pathways. The following chapter takes a speculative look at the future of the profession grounded in the value of soft skills and exploring up and coming technologies including the growth in AI and medical advances such as teeth grown from stem cells.

The final chapter sums up the thoughts of the authors with the hope that this book celebrating the achievements of dental nurses has ‘piqued your interest to look more deeply at the history of dental nursing and what it teaches us today and for tomorrow’.

***How to develop your career in dental nursing*, edited by Janine Brooks and Fiona Ellwood, is published by Wiley Blackwell (ISBN 9781119861706). For more information visit <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/book/10.1002/9781119861737>.**

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