



Meet the author: Keerut Oberai

Keerut Oberai is the author of *BDJ Team's* ongoing series, 'An introduction to dental ethics'. *BDJ Team* Editor Kate Quinlan caught up with Keerut to find out more about him and the inspiration behind these important articles.

What attracted you to dentistry?

Keerut: I have always been interested in science but also really enjoyed studying art. Dentistry allowed me to combine my interests and gave me the opportunity to interact with patients. After a variety of work experience, I decided upon studying dentistry and was awarded a place at the University of Liverpool Dental School. My uncle and older brother are also dentists. Both inspired my decision to study dentistry and have helped me a lot throughout my career. I had a great five years at Liverpool Dental School and thoroughly enjoyed being in a great city.

Why did you choose to study for an intercalated degree in Philosophy?

Between my fourth and fifth years of dental school I had the opportunity to intercalate in Philosophy at King's College London. Philosophy and particularly ethics had always interested me, so I jumped at the chance to study it. There was a lot to learn over the course of the year which culminated in a dissertation focusing on autonomy and consent which are two pivotal topics in dental ethics.

Once you had graduated BDS, did you enjoy being a full-time dentist?

I completed my Foundation Training in a practice in Southwater, West Sussex, where I still work to this day as well as working as an associate in West London for three years.

As for most young dentists it was daunting at first, but overall, I have enjoyed developing as a dentist and have tried to learn as much as possible over the last few years.

You have a long list of academic achievements – what led you to undertake your master's and then a teaching certificate?

During my Foundation Training, I very quickly realised that I wanted to develop my knowledge of Dental Ethics and Law and build on my intercalated BSc in Philosophy. This led to me being accepted onto a Master's in Medical Ethics and Law at King's College London. I was able to study this part time and practise dentistry alongside which was a real benefit. The course helped me develop my knowledge of dental/medical law and apply ethics to practical examples. During this time, I had a real desire to eventually teach dental ethics, so I enrolled on a PGCert in Dental Education at the University of Bedfordshire.

I have always enjoyed learning and have an interest in a broad range of subjects. I have focused on developing my knowledge of dentistry, ethics and law but have a keen interest in other topics which I spend a lot of time reading up on.

What led you to launch the educational site 'Healthcare Ethics and Law' and what does this platform offer?

I really enjoy teaching dental/medical ethics and law and have delivered numerous webinars and group teaching sessions on the topic to dentists and medics. During the pandemic, I wanted to bring this together and create a learning resource for healthcare professionals of all backgrounds to learn about the topic.

It is a subject area which is increasingly at the forefront of our minds, especially as dental professionals, so I wanted to provide a website which compiled guidelines, webinars, articles, papers and resources which are easily accessible. For those that are interested in the topic and who have enjoyed this series they can access more content at <https://www.healthcareethicsandlaw.co.uk/>.

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You are currently studying at Oxford and working part-time as a dentist; is this challenging?

That is correct, I have been studying a part time Master's in Practical Ethics at the University of Oxford to further my knowledge of the topic and to develop my ability to apply ethics to practical everyday situations. It has been difficult to balance working alongside the Master's but it's been an amazing experience so the sacrifice has been worth it.

My working week is busy, and I try to balance it with my interest in ethics and law and other things that I enjoy. Some weeks it is easier to balance things than others but overall, I like to keep busy and so it works well.

How do you spend down-time?

I enjoy playing golf on the weekends and try to keep as active as possible. I also spend a lot of time cooking for friends and family.

Why would you encourage DCPs to read your ethics series in BDJ Team?

The topic of Dental Ethics and Law is particularly important to DCPs in our everyday practising lives. I have tried to present more of the ethical side of things which I think is often not taught in as much detail as the legal side. My aim was to make it as accessible as possible and hopefully, useful, to those that read it.

Part 4 is published this January; are there many more parts to come?

There is one final part left. The first four parts have laid out the different ethical frameworks used in dental ethics. The fifth and final part will look at applied examples such as the ethics behind water fluoridation. I think it

is very important with ethics to be able to apply it to practical examples which will help contextualise the previous parts of the series and the theory that has been discussed.

I would also like to thank you, Kate, and BDJ Team for allowing me the opportunity to develop this series. It has been a real joy to be able to share some of the knowledge that I have learnt so far, and it is something I am really passionate about.

Do you have any interesting plans for 2024 that you would like to share?

This year, I am hoping to continue to develop my website and produce some more webinars. I am also developing a longer format e-book which I hope to release later in the year. This will go into more detail on the topic of dental ethics and some of the themes which have been discussed in this series so far.

Useful links

1. An introduction to dental ethics Part 1 – Ethical theory: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41407-023-1860-z>
2. An introduction to dental ethics Part 2 – Consequentialist and utilitarian ethics: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41407-023-1893-3>
3. An introduction to dental ethics Part 3 – Concepts of professionalism through duty-based ethics and virtue ethics: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41407-023-1922-2>
4. An introduction to dental ethics Part 4 – The four principles of biomedical ethics. Part 1: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41407-024-2060-1>.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41407-024-2052-1>