PERSONAL ACCOUNT

Designing a top notch app

Dr Shivam Divani explains why and how he created My Dental Care, an app voted 'App of the Year' and endorsed by the British Dental Association.

My Dental Care is a free dental app created to help improve dental prevention and education for the general public. It is designed so that patients can learn about their oral health in their own time and so that dental professionals have a concise educational resource ready to give to their patients at no cost. The app should be used in combination with dental professionals' verbal instructions to help reinforce your preventative care.

The idea for My Dental Care originally came to me after my nephew's first birthday party. When speaking to his first-time parents, I was surprised to find out that they were never informed about how to look after their child's teeth, and had lots of unanswered questions. I was sure that many other people were in a similar situation, which made me start to research ways to overcome this issue.

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Back then I was a dental student at the Barts and the Royal London Dental hospital. I was very passionate about demonstrating to my patients how easy it can be to prevent dental issues by making simple changes, and the impact this can have on their general oral health over the years to come. At the time, we didn't have any educational leaflets to hand out and I found myself repeating the same verbal information again and again. This created a problem as it can be difficult for patients to retain all this useful advice after one consultation, and there is also a limit to the amount of information which can be discussed. As dental students, our tutors would give us handouts for their lectures so that we can learn in our own time, so I wondered, why were we not doing the same for our patients?

I saw that creating an app was the best way to help tackle this issue. As a dental community, we needed a good way to get this vital preventative information out there to the general public. I had a great idea, but the next step was trying to make this into a reality.

I spent almost a year trying to seek help for my idea from senior tutors and different departments at university but unfortunately I didn't get very far. However, every time I got a rejection or something didn't pan out I learnt from it and moved on. I ended up just doing it on my own in my spare time and figuring out the next obstacle as I went along. After three years and over 750+ hours of hard work, I finally had an amazing professional looking dental app which was ready to be used by the next generation of dental students at Barts and the Royal London Dental Hospital. I didn't expect my small

project/app to turn into what it is today and for it to be used internationally by dentists.

I designed the app with the end user in mind, making sure the language was very concise, simple and easy to understand by multiple age groups. I wanted it so that anyone could download the app and start learning straight away. This took a very long time, a lot of creativity and incredible support from close friends, and I cannot thank them enough for putting up with me. Since launching the app I now have an amazing group of young dentists volunteering to help me try and make a difference in the way we approach prevention in dentistry. I was astonished by the number of like-minded dentists wanting to join and help out with the project.

After creating the written content, I wanted to make sure the information was evidence-based, accurate and reliable. Therefore, I made sure that all the written information went through peer-reviewing, multiple times by various dental consultants and specialists in their respective fields at Barts and the Royal London Dental Hospital. After many months of persistence, I eventually had the related sections reviewed and modified by two great dental organisations, the British Society of Periodontology and the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry. The preventative information in this dental app is also based on the recommendations set out by Public Health England in their prevention tool kit.

Since 'My Dental Care' app officially launched, it went on to win 'App of the Year' at the Dental Industry Awards and has officially been endorsed by the British Dental Association. As mentioned it is being used internationally and it's amazing some of the messages we get on our social media platform about how it has helped people and local communities around the world.

The app is free to download and contains no adverts; I personally fund the running costs which I am happy to do as I know it is making a difference. It should save the NHS money by reducing the number of educational leaflets printed out. The information on the app will be consistently updated as new research comes to light. The app will remain free in the hope that it reaches as many people as possible. As a dentist, I do not want to only treat my patients' symptoms, but help them prevent the causes of their problems and education is the key.

My Dental Care can be downloaded for free on the Apple App Store or Google Play. I am happy for any dental professional to use the My Dental Care software as a tool in their local dental community/practice. If you wish to get in touch email info@dentalcareapp.com. ■