

# Redeployed to A&E

By Sophie Fleming, Liverpool

I have recently been working in our local A&E department due to redeployment, which has been an incredible learning curve, but has also raised some questions. One thing I couldn't help but notice was the amount of dental problems that present to A&E. As the dental hospital is a mere stone's throw from the emergency department, this was rather confusing. This pattern of presentation would be understandable if it were limited to out of hours, or if it was only occurring due to the inaccessibility to dental services that some patients are currently experiencing, but apparently this is a common occurrence. I have also witnessed this phenomenon in reverse, where patients present to the dentist having already waited for hours in A&E.

So, what brings patients to hospital instead of a dentist? Speaking to patients, some people would rather go anywhere but

the dentist. Some people get swellings and worry that it may need medical attention. Occasionally, patients don't seem to realise that it's a dentist that they need to see. Speaking to doctors, they often aren't very comfortable with dental issues, and were generally quite happy if I could be there to assist. So we have uncomfortable patients, uncomfortable doctors and a whole dental hospital full of the necessary equipment and knowledge to help – what's going wrong?

Given that A&E departments aren't generally made for dental emergencies, these patients will inevitably need to come to us to get the necessary treatment. It would make sense that these patients should be sent straight to the dentist on presentation. However, if dental pain patients are sent away, then this leaves all the responsibility with the patient, and could leave hospitals open to a medico-legal nightmare. There also

seems to be an 'antibiotics and painkillers' culture, where dental pain isn't totally understood.

While I was there, I was able to speak to staff and give an overview of DPTs, simple treatments with the materials they have, and when to refer on to us. After the onslaught of medical knowledge that I was being taught, it was quite refreshing to feel like I could give something back. I appreciated the opportunity to cross the barrier and to speak to our medical colleagues, and it gave us the chance to understand how we can work together. Being able to share knowledge in this way seemed beneficial for both parties, and is something that could be useful in the future.

So whether it's the patient's dental phobia, a fear of 'not doing something active' or public perception and availability of resources, there are certainly improvements to be made.

Despite the difficult and challenging circumstances, this has been a great experience and I am leaving A&E with a huge sense of respect for our medical colleagues and pride in the NHS. ■

## Foundation dentists distribute donations to the front line

*Dr Onkar Mudhar reports on behalf of his dental training consultants group who have been fundraising and donating to hospitals around the UK.*



During the last few weeks, the entire dental profession has been turned upside down. As a group, we thrive on regularity and a sequential set of steps.

Furthermore, in a line of work that is uniquely social, it was a collective blow

to us all when it was announced we were to cease all routine and emergency dentistry – leaving the majority of us either idle at home, telephone triaging or even in some cases, being redeployed to the frontline or to urgent care centres.

Being a foundation dentist during this strange period, a large amount of my time was initially taken up by admin: filling in large amounts of paperwork to ascertain whether my transferrable skills could be used in a hospital environment. As the weeks passed, we were informed we would be contacted if we were needed.

Sat at home, flicking between emails and webinars, seeing first-hand on social media how scarce resources were including food and oral health products, I decided I ought to make good use of any spare time and contact companies directly to acquire donations to be sent to the frontline.

Alongside my colleagues Dr Shivana Anand and Dr Zahid Siddique, Co-Directors of Dental Training Consultants, we put together a plan to try and collect as many products as possible.

We started small, donating any spare samples we had, but slowly the initiative grew. After speaking to large companies such as Colgate, Galderma, Burt's Bees, GSK and the Oral Health Foundation, we were able to collect large volumes of products including oral health kits (containing toothbrushes, toothpaste and mouthwash) to be distributed to hospitals, homeless shelters and care homes in London and Essex.

In total, around 10,000 individual products have been donated to patients and frontline staff so far, a feat we are extremely proud of. We hope that we can continue to provide support once the pandemic is behind us!