

DAY IN THE LIFE OF A DENTAL SPECIALIST

'Don't be afraid to pivot and embrace opportunity'

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How does your day usually begin? Like many entrepreneurs, I tend to be part of the 5 am club as there are minimal distractions at this time, although having a baby has now made this less optimal!

I live in London – I have always been based in the capital and love how globally accessible it is – with my husband Nil who is Operations Director of RW Perio.

We welcomed our beautiful daughter Riya Wadia-Patel to the world in November. Her arrival was the most special Diwali and birthday gift.

For breakfast, a tall, caramel macchiato with oat milk is my non-negotiable start to the day, and my daily diet is vegetarian, bordering on vegan. Porridge with fruit and nuts sets me up for a busy morning, and when in Central London, a breakfast meeting at Maison Estelle or Home House is always the ultimate treat.

How far away from work do you live?

From a lifestyle aspect I am predominantly W1 based unless travelling for business. I can walk to work in Harley Street in 20 minutes – it beats rush hour traffic every time.

We are currently finalising the build of our new home in Totteridge, which still enables fast access to Zone 1. When not on Harley Street, I love taking advantage of all the culture that London has to offer.

What is your typical working week?

As a businesswoman having the opportunity to be at the heart of many aspects of the dental industry and beyond is most

rewarding. No two days are the same and it's certainly a lifestyle approach so you don't count the hours. I'm so lucky to wake up in the morning and be doing something I love.

A typical day begins with a morning of patients, media appearances/meetings after lunch, and often teaching and product development. I am very privileged to now be in my Mama era also.

I love having the opportunity to spread our message and regularly present at global events and work with leading organisations to help align this strategy of incorporating gum health into general health and wellbeing.

Organisation is crucial, as is having a team around you who are experts in their field. At RW Perio everyone here is working to the highest industry standard and we have a collaborative approach.

How did you originally get into dentistry?

There are many medics in my family, but I knew from a very young age that I wanted to focus on a career within dentistry. The renowned dentist Manny Vasant was my dentist and he truly inspired me to pursue dentistry as a career and he was incredibly professional and is a fantastic individual.

Once I decided on dentistry, I couldn't imagine considering a role in any other industry. During the early years every summer I ensured I built up work experience at different practices.

I qualified from Barts and The London with the prestigious Gold Medal as the highest achieving dentist in London as well as numerous other undergraduate dental awards.

How did your career develop from there?

Following general practice, I worked as a Senior House Officer in both Restorative Dentistry and Oral Surgery. I always knew my long-term vision was to go on to specialise after completing my five years of dental school. I went on to qualify as the youngest periodontist in the UK that year, completing the part-time speciality training programme in periodontology at Guy's Hospital.

I then went on to work as an associate for several practices and was an associate specialist at King's College Hospital.

These steps all led me to embark on my true purpose – build my own specialist clinic RW Perio, into an established, state-of-the-art flagship on Harley Street and home to our global teaching academy Perio School.

Why did you decide to specialise in periodontology?

My mission has always been to change the way the field of periodontology is perceived. For the public and most dental professionals, gums are usually lower down on the priority list when compared with more aesthetic teeth-related procedures.

Over the last decade, I have been committed to bringing forward the importance of gum health as a first step to overall health/wellness and a necessary foundation prior to any other dental procedure. Furthermore, 75% of dental litigation claims are related to periodontology – I was keen to significantly lower this statistic. ▶▶

« What is required to specialise in this area of dentistry?

After five years of dental school, I went on to complete the part-time speciality training programme in periodontology at Guy's Hospital (Periodontology MCLinDent [Part-time], King's College London [passed with Distinction 2013–2017]).

What do you enjoy the most about your work?

The variation! My personal aim at every stage as an entrepreneur myself is to bring satisfaction and pride to everyone linked to the different aspects of the business as we continue to grow at scale. Being a people person, building long-lasting relationships with colleagues, learned mentors and other businesses is something I continue to find truly valuable, which effortlessly aligns with our own values of excellence and collaboration.

What do you find most challenging?

My journey as an entrepreneur and businesswoman began at full speed at founder level, as I presided over a rapidly thriving global brand which has grown at a rate average by 46% per year – delivered with no external investment.

Confidence to take ownership of the role and constantly looking at tasks and responsibilities and asking, 'how could we do this better?' has ensured we have maintained our growth trajectory. It has also enabled us to sidestep anticipated business landmines that come with building an international brand that is also attached to the medically demanding industry of specialist dentistry.

Can you describe the team you work with?

Since inception, we have grown on average by 46% per year. The business has expanded from three to now 22 team members.

The clinical team includes specialist periodontists Dr Devan, Dr Jay, Dr Chandni and Dr Sajni. We have an in-house team of advanced hygienists who all have the exclusive postgraduate diploma in periodontics.

We have our own dedicated office behind the scenes in addition to our main reception area. Here we have the Patient Experience Team – our PAs and our Patient Care Lead who look after the full 360 journey here for both our patients and referrers.

Our Brand Director Jasmin is uniquely based in-house and has a 14-year background in luxury business and media

oversees branding and PR strategy and my husband Nil is our Operations Director.

Do you see a wide variety of patients?

Patients are split 50:50 male and female; we treat all ages across the entire family. In clinic we have noticed a recent dramatic shift in the world of dentistry as patients adopt a health-first approach – as an investment in your oral health is an investment in your general health.

Our treatment plans are designed to be accessible to all patients. We offer interest-free finance plans to every patient and also have an Annual Advanced Hygiene Membership option.

'My personal aim as an entrepreneur is to bring satisfaction and pride to everyone linked to the different aspects of the business as we grow'

What do you usually do for lunch?

Every day is different but when working in clinic I love nothing more than managing to touch base over a quick lunch with my team – they always inspire me and it's a great chance to check in on how their morning has been and touch base on patient updates – referrers in the area also regularly pop by. Other days may involve a business lunch around Mayfair or a panel event. My team and I also regularly host CPD sessions during lunch where we go and visit referring practices or via Zoom for those further afield.

How do you spend your evenings?

Evenings can often include speaker events or media appearances, so after leaving Harley Street, there is usually a final destination before making it home for bathtime and a feed with my daughter. I am lucky to have a fantastic support network that enables me to balance out family and dentistry and my husband and daughter usually accompany me throughout the day.

What are your interests outside work?

I've always been passionate about travel and like to have a trip planned every few months as it's so inspiring to immerse yourself in a new culture and keep learning. Closer to home, interior design has been on my radar since embarking on our house move, and it's opened up a whole new world. Given the industry I am attached to, it's vital to be

the healthiest version of yourself, and I like to stay super active – Pilates is always my workout of choice.

Investing in family time is my favourite time of the week and ensuring I am fully reset for a busy week ahead. Long walks in Hyde Park with a podcast is where you'll usually find me at the weekend and I always aim to take advantage of London galleries, not only special exhibitions but also permanent collections. Concerts and live music are always on my radar, and I often attend with other dental professionals. When you are working hard, little luxuries are important, and a vegan afternoon tea at Fortnum & Mason hits the spot.

What time do you usually go to bed?

Sleep is vital to ensure I remain on top form, and juggling this with a newborn has been a new challenge, but we're all in a settled routine now – usually by 11 pm, things are fully winding down, although I am often navigating media appearances across multiple time zones.

What advice would you give to those about to embark on their own career journey?

I qualified as a periodontist on an academic pathway and then diverted to an entrepreneurial one, so don't be afraid to pivot and embrace opportunity and your instinct even if others may doubt you at the start. Taking calculated risks is often crucial to enable you to scale your career both quickly and safely. Most importantly, don't give up on the first hurdles, and remember to have fun along the way.

What inspires you?

One of the reasons I wanted to launch my podcast, Life & Smile, is because I personally find it so inspiring to hear how other entrepreneurs have built their own careers across contrasting industries and shattered those glass ceilings. With every episode I'm joined in conversation with a specialist expert in their chosen field, who gives us a behind-the-scenes glimpse into their daily regime, career turning points and an insider look at what they can't live without. ▶▶

« From a practice setting, have you noticed any trends in the world of periodontology?

Gum aesthetics are at the forefront of specialist dentistry and these 'tweakments' can dramatically improve the overall smile. This can cover everything from gum lifts/gum sculpting to correction of gum recession. Often, many people are unaware that these treatments are available with minimal disruption to their lifestyle during the procedure, with fast recovery and little downtime afterwards.

The language of dentistry has changed dramatically over the last few years, and I have strived to ensure that gum health is now at the forefront of specialist dentistry. Gums are often overlooked; however,

without healthy gums, you cannot go on to create your perfect smile with the likes of orthodontics, veneers, bonding, etc.

There is now a key focus on combining both health with aesthetics. Achieving the perfect smile isn't just about masking imperfections; it's about investing in the health of your mouth for the long term.

The RW Perio Gum Veneer makes a dramatic difference to the smile, and we always use the latest and most trusted technology for all treatments. Many dental professionals refer to us prior to aesthetic or restorative work to ensure the gums are stable and healthy; we love collaborating on joint cases with our referrers.

Any life goals still on your agenda?

We are coming into the seventh anniversary

of RW Perio this year. Our goal is to make a notable impact by bringing gum health into global healthcare.

Alongside my dedicated team, our focus is to always think internationally and lead the way in dentistry by putting gum health on the map.

The next step to this is we are about to launch our product range *By Dr Reena*, redesigning your dental regime with a collection that delivers high-performance results tailored to specialist clinical requirements, with buyers secured at the inception stage. ■

Interview by Kate Quinlan

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BSPD requests questions at Health and Social Care Select Committee panel enquiry

Ahead of the Health and Social Care Select Committee's scheduled panel enquiry on Tuesday 19 March, the President of the British Society of Paediatric Dentistry (BSPD), Professor Paula Waterhouse, wrote to each of the 11 committee members, including the Chair, Steve Brine MP, laying out questions that should be put to the panel.

Including the Society's 'Blueprint' for paediatric dental recovery,¹ Professor Paula Waterhouse said: 'BSPD has high expectations of the enquiry since the crisis in dentistry is now a matter of urgency. What is needed is a serious plan that demands measurable outcomes, to grip the immediate crisis and set NHS dentistry on the path to recovery in the long-term.'

BSPD requested that the following questions were put to the panel:

1. Regarding the proposed mobile vans, are they mobile units able to deliver treatment – or simply vans delivering toothbrushes and toothpaste? If they are mobile units, where have they been moved from and where will the workforce come from?
2. How were the locations of the mobile units decided? Please can you seek reassurance that the decision has been clinically led, with involvement of



- dental public health teams to ensure they will be located in areas of high need and low access, rather than positioning them in marginal Conservative seats?
3. How will SmileForLife differ from the existing Smile4Life which appears to remain live on the NHSE website (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/primary-care/dentistry/smile4life/>)?
4. Why does the plan opt for fluoride varnish instead of supervised toothbrushing, when the latter has a stronger evidence base and would provide

a greater return on investment? (NB: fluoride varnish provides only a modest and non-significant reduction in dental caries experience at a relatively high cost when delivered in a nursery setting twice a year from three years of age).

At the time of writing, BSPD looked forward to a productive panel enquiry.

References

1. BSPD issues paediatric oral health blueprint to Liz Truss. *Br Dent J* 2022; **233**: 524.