

A DENTIST'S LIFE

I'm not heavy, I'm a dentist

Interview by Stephen Hancocks

Rob Digastric qualified from Leeds in 2003 and now works in a long-established general dental practice in a pleasant market town in the North-east.

I get up working day mornings about 6:30 am and make myself a cup of coffee before going back to bed and reading the news on my mobile phone as I am heavily into both current affairs and technology. After a shower, shave and so on I go downstairs and make another coffee and breakfast. I am heavily into healthy eating so I make the first meal of the day an exception to this by having two or three *pain au chocolats* and some digestive biscuits. Generally I cycle to work, which I calculate burns off most of the calories in at least one of the biscuits, arriving about 8:15 am if there is no traffic and it isn't raining or foggy.

I like to get in before the first appointment so I can check the day book on my tablet. This helps me to worry more about the patients I am going to see during the treatment sessions, the stress of which I calculate burns off about half of one *pain au chocolat*. My nurse, Pamela, brings me another coffee and some fruit as I have told her about me being heavily into healthy eating. Overall I like seeing patients and the practice allows me a great deal of freedom in some restricted clinical areas, which I appreciate to the extent of agreeing to forfeit a higher percentage of my income.

I have recently been on an implants course given by a visiting US dentist to help further my surgical knowledge. The amount of information packed into the whole half-day has really helped in boosting my confidence and of the two implants that I have inserted so far I have a 100% success rate, one having been in place for a fortnight and the other for nearly five weeks.

By midmorning I can feel my sugar levels dropping so some more fruit is needed, a slice of banoffee pie being ideal, together with a latte or cappuccino. At lunchtime I might go for a short bike ride or a slightly

longer stroll as there is a very good local baker's shop about three-quarters of a mile away. Their Cornish pasties are very good and my Apple watch calculates that I burn the equivalent of eating an apple and mango using either means of transport.

At dental school I really enjoyed paediatric dentistry but there is not so much opportunity to practise it here as the children who need treatment are often fractious and those who are pleasant and chatty rarely need anything doing. I understand that orthodontics is a real growth area but I have always found that a bit tedious which is as well, as it is a long specialist training programme.

My life is full of one or two hobbies which include martial arts and cooking. My partner is a freelance brand awareness consultant. She works a lot for a company based in Albania so I often cook for myself in the evening having downloaded a recipe from my iPad on the way home or popped into Waitrose for a ready meal, having checked online that they have stock. If it is a martial arts night I cycle home, have a coffee and change before driving the 25 or so miles to the club premises (actually a church hall). The exercise can be surprisingly vigorous and I often join the others afterwards for some fish and chips as there is an excellent shop just minutes away.

I am usually home and in bed with a coffee by about 10 pm and read the news on my laptop. I am almost as heavily into my laptop as I am into healthy eating as it seems to have a greater 'weight' than the other technologies, smart as they are.

Would I recommend dentistry as a career to young people? Yes I would. You get to help people, use your hands and drink a lot of coffee all of which makes you a better person, especially if you are heavily into things. ■

Shortage of staff caused by Christmas party excess

Dentistry is facing a crisis according to a report in a national tabloid newspaper. Apparently there is an alleged shortage of dentists due to excess partying. The article claims that dentists are showing blatant disregard for workplace standards, drinking sherry at their leisure and eating chocolate yule log in the dental chair. One section of the story points to 50% of staff members 'being totally unaware of which practice they work for', and simply turning up in scrubs at any practice ready to work. A further 24% of practices are reporting unidentified damage to their photocopier machines, with patients also complaining about 'running a mistletoe gauntlet' on their way to the examination room.

According to one dentist, he wished it could be Christmas every day, as he was particularly fond of children singing and bands playing. Another described how last Christmas she gave a colleague her loupes and the very next day they gave them away, so this year she won't be repeating the same mistake and will give them to someone special.

The dentist shortfall is likely to cause significant problems for patients hoping to be seen in the Christmas period. Singer Chris Masse said: 'I drive home for Christmas all the time just to see my dentist. After Christmas dinner it's our family tradition to visit the dental surgery as we're pretty tired from the day. Instead of cleaning our teeth we enjoy a good scale and polish. To hear that we might not be able to do this as he's run off with six elves and a partridge in a pear tree is shocking.'

A BDA spokesperson condemned the article as being wholly unfounded but added that it was significant for a tabloid in that for once it didn't mention money.'

Note to readers: This content has been created for the entertainment of readers in the spirit of seasonal good humour and, on the whole, possesses not an ounce of truth. All persons, products, URLs and email addresses mentioned have been invented by the BDJ editorial team.