

'This is definitely the right profession for me!'

Balraj Singh Sohal, 22, is a 4th year dental student and President of King's College London Dental Society.



I usually get up at around 6.30 am every day. I live at home with my family in Barking and travel to university by tube, which takes about 40 minutes door to door.

My weekly timetable consists of four days of clinics with a tutorial before most clinical sessions. The sessions vary from perio clinics to prosthodontics clinics and are all quite involved.

When I was young I was a keen footballer and so was set on pursuing football – a boy can dream! I researched the dental profession quite thoroughly before applying for dentistry. As every other dental student would say, I was always pretty good at science at school and enjoyed biology and learning about the human body. Naturally this drew me to medicine, although after doing a few weeks' worth of work experience I realised medicine was not for me. After this I turned to dentistry so I arranged to shadow my local dentist. I loved the balance dentistry offered of getting to know your patients, alleviating their problems, and ultimately overseeing each step of their treatment. I feel that very few professions can offer such a unique balance of holistic care.

I started at King's in 2013 and from the beginning I have always enjoyed restorative dentistry. I love being able to instantly see the outcome of my work and I feel restorative dentistry offers exactly that, for example, removing caries and eradicating the patient's symptoms not long afterwards.

As I've progressed through the course, however, I've really begun to enjoy all the other areas of dentistry: prosthetics, endodontics and oral surgery to mention a few. I assume it's because I'm getting more exposure to the different aspects of dentistry and building my experience, whilst ultimately enjoying it throughout, which is great because it reminds me that this is definitely the right profession for me!

I'm happy to say that I'm enjoying every part of the course. Naturally when you do things for the first time you find them challenging, but I'm thankful to say I have some amazing tutors guiding me to become more confident and competent when practising dentistry, easing almost all challenges. I feel that the standard of dentistry at King's is second to none; there's a reason why it's considered one of the most prestigious dental institutions internationally.

I usually have a packed lunch with me. I find having lunch in Central London every day is ridiculously expensive and doesn't sit well with my bank balance!

Funnily enough, when I started at King's I wasn't really interested in joining the Dental Society committee but during my first year I noticed how active the Society was which changed my opinion. I decided to put my name down for President in second year as that is when the nomination process begins.

Five other candidates ran for President at the same time as me and we all spent a week campaigning and trying to convince as many students as possible in the Dental School to vote for us. The votes were counted and I won! I wanted to become President because I felt there were a lot of ways I could add value to and improve the Dental Society. King's Dental Society has a massive voice within the Dental Institute so I wanted to implement some innovative ideas, which thankfully I can say I have. Presidency technically consists of two years and it involves acting as president-elect for one year (during third year) and then acting as president for one year (during fourth year). My duties involve overseeing the work of the Dental Society committee which consists of over 25 students and some staff members while also sitting on numerous education committees and the KCL Dental Alumni Committee.

'At the beginning of the year I made a plan and wanted to implement meaningful but realistic improvements into the Dental Society's work'

In addition to working with an incredible committee of dental students, I've been lucky enough to have unparalleled support from senior members within the Dental Institute including my Staff President Dr Helena Lewis-Greene. At the beginning of the year I made a plan and wanted to implement meaningful but realistic improvements into the work of the Dental Society. For that reason the Dental Society this year launched a hands-on undergraduate composite course. It involved tutors of the KCL Aesthetics Master's programme Dr Subir Banerji and Dr Shamir Mehta teaching year 4 and year 5 students on how to build an aesthetic composite Class IV

restoration whilst employing techniques such as tints, layering and general tips for aesthetic work. In addition to this DentSoc launched a new initiative called the Widening Participation Programme which involves King's dental students visiting local non-selective state schools to help mentor school students with their application to dental school, offer advice on dental school interviews and share tips when preparing for the UKCAT. We aim to work in partnership with schools performing below the national average where the students generally do not have access to such support when applying to higher education programmes and so improving their prospects in applying to dental school.

'I feel balancing all of these commitments helps build character and teaches you skills like good leadership and communication'

All of the success and praise we've enjoyed this year at the Dental Society has been due to the amazing work of the committee as well as the generosity and support from staff such as Professor Woolford, Dr Cabot, Dr Lewis-Greene and Dr Tom Bereznicki.

I always knew being President of the Dental Society would carry great responsibility but I don't think I accurately predicted the workload in addition to my studies. I feel balancing all of these commitments with what I like to do outside of dental school helps

build character and teaches you skills like good leadership, good communication and good time-management, all essential skills of being a good dentist.

I will graduate in 2018 and my current plan is to do DCT after completing my DF1 training. I feel hospital experience at that stage of my career will be invaluable to my development as a dentist and will put me in good stead for more complex dentistry, allowing me to potentially specialise in the future. I can see myself specialising at some point, although at the minute I'm currently back and forth as to what my speciality will be. I think I'll need some time to enjoy general dentistry and find my feet first.

My longer term ambitions include opening a practice of my own one day, learning another language and settling down to have a family!

Outside of dentistry I enjoy sports and keeping fit. My two favourite sports are football and tennis, both of which I love to play and watch. In the past I've played competitive football and have been lucky enough to visit a few different countries playing in football tournaments, although nowadays I play for leisure. I routinely go to the gym; I enjoy this a lot because it's a good way to break up my day and helps take my mind off teeth! I also enjoy travelling and I try to go on holiday once every few months (if I can afford it!).

I enjoy getting together with friends and family to catch up on the weekends. I have a lot of good friends who are not studying dentistry so spending time with them is great because it allows me to switch off from dentistry and appreciate what they're doing with their lives.

After clinics, the gym, doing some work, preparing for tutorials and catching up on admin, I go to bed. ■

BDA Museum acquires nineteenth century dental mirror

This white metal dental mirror which belonged to Frederick Abraham Eskell has recently been acquired at auction by the BDA Museum. The mirror measures 8.5 cm and is carved on the reverse and housed in a red leather box inscribed with the dentist's name.

Frederick A. Eskell (1818-1874) was born in Scotland into an already established dental family. His father Philippus Van Noorden, later Philip Eskell (1784-1862), and his four brothers had set sail from Rotterdam for a new life in Britain in 1795. A connection with dentist Herman Lyons of Edinburgh and a change of name and Philip set out on a dental career. He married and moved to Sheffield around 1839 and placed his first advertisement in the local paper.

At the age of 25, Frederick A. Eskell moved to Manchester and opened a practice at 28 Cooper Street, moving to 32 Cooper Street within a few years. Following his father's prolific use of advertising F. A. Eskell announced his arrival too. By 1858 father and son operated highly successful practices in Sheffield, Manchester, Liverpool and Warrington. Frederick moved with his wife and ten children to 25 Hanover Square, London in 1871 and joined with other members of the family. His son Louis continued the dental dynasty.

Your donations to the Gelbier Acquisition and Conservation Fund made this acquisition possible. Please help the BDA Museum to continue to acquire important objects for its unrivalled collection. Donate now at www.bda.org/gelbierfund.

For further information the publication *The Eskells, The story of a family* by Louis B. Eskell is available from the BDA library.

