

Getting there

The journey to work is a common experience for us all but does it always reflect what we might expect from our team members?

Stephen Hancocks watches the door as opening time approaches.

Unless we live at work, and sometimes it seems as if we might just as well since it takes up so many of our waking (and sometimes snoozing) hours, we all have to make it into the surgery by some means or another. Of course some practices are in the home, or home is 'above the shop', in which case the trip from bed, or at least breakfast table, to operating stool can be a matter of yards and possibly a few stairs. But this is for the lucky minority, lucky that is in terms of travelling time, since being so 'available' can also have other out-of-hours consequences.

For the rest of us who live at a distance there are many options. Road, rail and foot are the obvious first choices of transport but horse, plane and even helicopter might not be ruled out in extreme circumstances.

There is an assumption that the gradient of luxury goes with the hierarchy in the practice but it may not always be the case. Certainly some dentists arrive in the latest glam model of a sporty low-slung car but others jog to the chairside, while the really obsessive do it with the addition of a rucksack full of bricks just to make the exercise harder still. In the meantime, the receptionist, who might come on

foot, could equally well be dropped off by her wealthy hubby (the job is actually a useful way of getting out of the house for a while) in his Rolls Royce – or perhaps her toy-boy in his Ferrari. There are advantages to being the first to greet the patients!

Various modes of getting to work bring their own logistical problems for the practice. Jogging and cycling are fine as long as there is somewhere to change and possibly, to er, shower? Nothing worse than having to sit in close proximity all day to someone who is blissfully unaware that their athletic body parts are less than 'social'. Plus, the bike, where do you put the bike? Fine if there is an outdoor area, a shed perhaps or a lean-to but what if it (or, horrors, they) have to spend the working day idling in the staff room, or a corridor or outside the loo? Tunics snagged on handlebars, tights on pannier bags and as for grazed ankles on pedals, well don't get me started! Murder.

But the cardinal rule has to be to not tell people your travel tribulations. However frustrated and angry you are, however irritating it is to be late when it really isn't your fault (if it was your problem by getting up late) or however polite your colleagues seem to be in listening to your miseries, no one is *really* that

interested. It is similar to coming back from holiday. We all ask 'did you have a good time?' out of convention because it would seem rude not to, but the very worst thing to do is to fully answer the question with masses of detail.

'Yes, it was great, thank you, a lovely hotel and a wonderfully relaxing time' (or something similar) is perfect. We can all move on satisfied that justice has been done.

The same is true of getting to work woes. The fact that the 7.56 wasn't running because of ice, snow, heat-buckled tracks, leaves or anything else doesn't cut the mustard. Traffic backed-up around Gunsmith Terrace because of a burst water main, lights-out at Wyatt Grove or a broken down lorry in Packard Avenue is all far less important to the people *who did get there on time* than the fact that they have had to do your work for you and missed their coffee as a result.

Not that it is all doom and gloom. The cheery arrival of the hygienist with a happy description of daffodils blowing in the spring breeze on the Dincaster bypass can lighten the atmosphere no end, as can the nurse, doubled up with laughter at some mishap at the bus stop.

If the trip in is a no-no in terms of descriptions please, please don't compound the crime by then openly anticipating the journey in

reverse. 'I'm sure you won't mind if I leave a bit early today but I don't want to get caught in [fill in the blanks]'. Well, none of us want to get caught in any of the [blanks], we all want to get home as soon as possible. But in actual fact, we do let them go a bit earlier if it is at all possible – rather meanly hoping that they'll just be stuck in Gunsmith Terrace that bit longer. Happy travelling!

