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LETTER

'THE DENTAL SETTING IS MY SECOND HOME'

I am always promoting dental nursing and how dental nurses have a positive effect on patients. I wondered whether I could share my 'day in the life' as a dental nurse in a cleft unit with readers of *Vital*?

My alarm goes off at 6.15 am but I usually doze – I'm not a morning person! Dave, my husband, has usually left, as he works shifts. Once up and raring to go with the kettle on, I wake my 11-year-old daughter and then try to wake my 9-year-old son. Depending on the day of the week we have breakfast together, or sometimes I'm on my own as I drop my children off at their respective schools for breakfast club.

I arrive at work at 8.30 am, normally chilled out as listening/laughing/singing along to the radio – it always used to be Radio 1 but these days I increasingly find myself tuning into Radio 2...

I say 'hi' to whoever is about, grab a coffee, change into my uniform ... and now I'm a dental nurse!

Part of my job is to prepare patients' notes at least a day before the patient attends for their appointment; this helps with knowing who is coming, what treatment is required and how I can help care for the patient and make sure the surgery runs smoothly.

My early morning job is to set up the surgery and check with reception any patient changes to the list that we have already

prepared. At the cleft unit, our patients sometimes see other members of the team when they visit. Knowing this in advance can help with making the best use of their time, so that they are seen by the right health professional at the right time. Working with a multi-disciplinary team is really rewarding and allows me to talk to other members of the cleft team about anything the patient might need.

Part of my day is to get all the equipment and material ready and then help the dentist in carrying out the procedure that she has planned. While doing this I like to support the patient throughout their appointment, reassuring them and explaining what is happening. Children who visit the paediatric dentist can have all dental treatment carried out here. This includes a check up of the whole mouth, tooth brushing advice, sugar intake advice, fluoride applications, fissure sealants and glass ionomer fillings. Dental nursing is a juggling act between helping dental clinicians carry out treatments, whilst at the same time making sure our patients are comfortable.

Working with the paediatric dentist (Deborah Franklin) we see children of all ages, so we can have a mix of children from six months to 16-years-old, all with different cleft types and sometimes other medical conditions. When we see a new baby for the first time, I will greet the family in the waiting room and bring them through to Dr Franklin.

Whilst the family are discussing medical history, I like to be in the background chatting/singing/reading to baby if appropriate, so everyone feels at ease.

On Tuesdays, we have two surgeries running between the orthodontist, paediatric dentist and dental hygienist. On these days we see adults as well as children and we may carry out lots of different procedures. Between the two dental nurses, we alternate clinics so we can both keep practising all our skills. Whether working with the dentist, orthodontist or hygienist, I am always thinking of the patient and how I can help them. For me the dental setting is my second home, but for others it can be an intimidating place, so I always try to engage with the patient to help make the dental visit as informal and relaxed as possible.

Sarah Boulton
*Specialist Dental Nurse, SW Cleft Unit,
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*Sarah wins an Oral-B Triumph 5000 with
SmartGuide worth £179.99.*



NORTH EAST COURSES

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North East: Queensway Dental Clinic
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NEBDN Certificate in Oral Health Education

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CPD days

For more information on these courses please telephone 01642 554667, email colette.meek@queensway.co.uk or visit the following website: www.queensway.co.uk.

**Colette Meek CertEd, BA Hons FE&Training
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FACEBOOK CORNER

Question: Where can a dental nurse go for a hepatitis B vaccine if her company won't pay and her NHS GP won't let her pay for it? The dental nurse is prepared to pay for the vaccine herself.

Answer: To see the responses to this question, just visit *Vital's* Facebook page at www.facebook.com/vitalmagazine.

Outcome: The dental nurse who asked this question is going to try and have her hepatitis B vaccine at a private clinic.



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