What makes dentists tick?

Maria Papavergos takes a reflective look at the dental profession and all the things to be positive about

When we think about our profession, more often than not, we are inundated with reflections on the difficult patients, the demanding treatments and the constant pressure from the tick of the clock. We are reminded about increasing regulation standards, the economic downturn and endless policies to update and adopt. Yet, while most of us like to air an occasional moan, we must remember what makes our profession glorious. What we are is a selected, privileged group of individuals that have trained laboriously to be armed with a unique set of skills and the rewarding application of them.

Transferable skills

We are equipped to make a difference, not only to our patients, but to anyone, anywhere in the world. There will never be a shortage of teeth and their associated problems. We have an opportunity to offer our skills to help in less fortunate parts of the world. Additionally, we have the means to participate in projects and studies that can deliver personal results, advance science and better the profession.

Support

All of us work with the support of a great team. Attentive and efficient support takes the weight off an intense job. We are cushioned by the luxury of teamwork and can create an enjoyable and happy environment at work by building good intra-practice relationships. Above all, patients sense a happy atmosphere, whereby everyone relaxes a bit more.

Practical challenge

Each day we meet a different face and a different challenge. Then we find practical solutions, without being tied to a computer screen, but with an array of tools, toys and kit that any schoolchild would dream about! A practical solution that makes someone smile is a satisfying end to an appointment. Even when the appointments are plentiful and the clock is ticking, we must remember we are providing visible results that have the power to produce a smile.

Making a difference

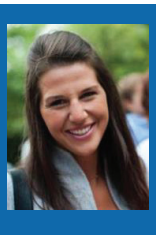
Building a relationship of trust and observing behavioural changes in patients is one of the most rewarding aspects of our job. From gaining compliance from a nervous child, to improving masticatory function, from listening to patient concerns to giving them confidence in their smiles, we can make a difference.

Furthermore, patients do appreciate us, even if they do not always show it. It is important to think back to all the thank-you notes and boxes of chocolates delivered at Christmas, to be reminded of our value to them.

Patients

It is people that make the world a great place. We meet a huge number of people that choose to invest their trust in us and often show us their unwavering loyalty. In our professional lives, we will form close relationships with many patients, see children grow up and flourish and witness people's pleasurable and painful life events. Representing a caring, empathetic ear, we are given a rare insight into the lives of many, from all walks of life. Moreover, not only are we meeting these people, but offering a service that will care for them and help them in their times of need.

So next time an uncooperative child sits in your dental chair and leaves you frustrated, running into your next appointment time, remember the short-term satisfaction of building a trusting relationship and witnessing their behavioural acceptance and eventual enjoyment of the dental setting. Then think to the long-term privilege of being a respected figure walking alongside this person's life, whoever they are.



Maria Papavergos
BDS(Newc) MJDF(RCS Eng) is an associate dental surgeon, working at Ferryburn Dental Care, Edinburgh. The Ferryburn team are passionate about smiles and can be found at www.ferryburn.co.uk. You can follow Maria on Twitter @Ferryburn_Fairy and the practice @ Ferryburn.

Image: Thinkstockphotos.com