Career Guide

Everything you need to know to start a successful and rewarding career in dentistry.
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Everything you need to know to start a successful and rewarding career in dentistry.

Written specifically for BDA student members, this guide is designed to help you with your future career choices. Experienced dentists give their own personal advice on a range of careers, from working in general practice to Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery.

This guide also contains information about:
• The different career paths available to you as a dentist
• What you need to do to get there
• Top tips for succeeding in your dental career

Dr Janine Brooks MBE also looks at changing patient demographics and the impact this may have on the future dental market and your potential career choices.

Think of your career more as a matrix to explore rather than a ladder to climb.

Dr Janine Brooks, MBE
Patient demographics: the future dental market

In this chapter, Dr. Janine Brooks MBE looks at changing patient demographics and the impact this may have on the future dental market and your potential career choices.

Dr. Janine Brooks MBE
CEO – Dentalia Coaching and Training Consultancy

Janine’s career highlights currently include being Associate Postgraduate Dental Dean in the Oxford and Wessex Deanery, educational inspector for the GDC, senior lecturer for the University of Northampton Foundation Degree in dental nursing, non-executive director for a dental social enterprise, lead clinical tutor Law and Ethics, Bristol University Open Learning for Dentists programme and last but not least, CEO of a coaching for leadership and training consultancy to dental professionals.

Her qualifications include MCDH, DDPHRCS, MSc in Health Informatics and a Doctorate in Medical Ethics from Keele University. Janine received an MBE for services to dentistry in the 2007, and was awarded a Fellowship of the Faculty of General Dental Practice by election in 2010.

Changing demands for dentistry

Dentistry is a service that exists because people need and seek dental care and treatment. Without patients few, if any, dentists would have a job.

However, the needs and demands for dentistry change over time as society changes, people change and diseases change. Dentists need to be aware of the patterns of population demographics and changes to disease levels. If not, our business will suffer. There is little point in choosing a career pathway if there will be no need or demand for it from patients. A simple piece of career advice is: don’t assume patients or dental disease will always remain the same – both are constantly changing.

When thinking about demographic trends what is it helpful to consider? There are many changes to our population. Some sectors are increasing in size whilst others are decreasing. For example, the number of older people is increasing, whilst the number of younger people is decreasing and is likely to stabilise. The older age groups will continue to predominate for some decades, however this is not evenly spread across the United Kingdom; some areas have more older people, particularly the very old. When thinking about where you wish to practice, you should consider the population profile and whether it matches the sort of dentistry you wish to provide.
Career options

With increasing competition for jobs in the dental profession, what can you do to make yourself stand out and what options are available to you after Dental Foundation Training and Vocational Training?

Tina Halai, a former DF2 at University Dental Hospital of Manchester, advises that after DF1/VT, there are broadly two initial paths you can follow, as shown below. This chapter looks at each of these options in more depth.

- **DF1**
  - **DCT/SHO**
    - Dental Hospital +/– Community dental services
    - District General Hospital
  - **GDP**
    - Courses, MSc’s, MClinDent
Hospital dental services

Job overview

The primary role of the hospital dental service is the provision of specialist advice and treatment for cases of special difficulty. These are referred to hospitals by general dental, salaried dental services and medical practitioners, or for patients admitted to hospital as a result of trauma. The hospital service also provides outpatient care in special cases where there are medical considerations that make it desirable for patients to be treated in a hospital setting.

Tina Halai, a former DF2 in Manchester, gives her advice about specialising.

One of the most popular specialities is restorative but with popularity comes competition. If you’re thinking of specialising in restorative dentistry, recent changes mean you would now become a specialist in one of the monospecialities in restorative – prosthodontics, endodontics or periodontics.

A paediatrics rotation would be good if you’re also considering a career in orthodontics or would like to work in the salaried dental services (community dentistry).

Oral surgery could be one for you if you would like to improve your technique with extractions, provide treatment under sedation, and if you would like to assist in theatre sessions without the more complex medical nature of Maxfax.

Oral medicine is also popular as you can see what sort of cases GDPs refer in. You can also develop diagnostic skills and practical skills such as taking biopsies.

It is good to spend a couple of years working in hospital as this gives you a range of experience and helps improve your CV – if you are proactive. In the future, I think specialising is likely to be the thing that sets one dentist apart from the rest.

A dentist working in a hospital post has the same terms and conditions of service as hospital doctors, as well as a very similar career structure. The hours may not be flexible and time will be spent “on call” sometimes resulting in long working sessions. Dentists generally work as part of a team, have access to specialised diagnostic facilities and work with consultants from other medical and dental specialities.

Career pathway

Your career will usually start in DCT, followed by a career development post, before working your way up over the years to be a consultant.

Within the dental specialties, career pathways will vary slightly, but all those aspiring to enter specialist training should complete two years of postgraduate training. This will usually include a minimum of one year in a secondary post, for example in a dental school or district general hospital. When you have (ideally) gained the MJDF or MFDS diploma you can apply for a formal training programme in your chosen specialty to become a Specialist Registrar (SpR). There are various examinations and diplomas that you will need to complete during your period of training. Once you have completed your training satisfactorily, a Certificate of Specialist Training (CST) will be issued and will entitle you to have your name on the specialist list held by the GDC.

Specialisation

The GDC has established distinctive specialist titles for a range of branches of dentistry. This decision was taken for a number of reasons, but largely to protect patients from unjustified claims of specialist expertise.

Specialist lists:

- Oral Surgery
- Dental Public Health
- Restorative Dentistry and its monospecialties: Endodontics, Periodontics, Prosthodontics
- Orthodontics
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2nd Edition

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