10 questions to Prof. Paul Tipton

By Euro Dental Depot

Prof. Paul Tipton is an internationally acclaimed prosthodontist who has worked in private practice for more than 30 years. He is the founder of one of UK’s leading private training academies and author of over 50 scientific articles for the dental press. Prof. Tipton shares his insights and career path with us in these questions revolving around his experiences in practicing dentistry as well as teaching all around the globe.

Euro Dental Depot: What made you decide to follow a career in dentistry?

Prof. Paul Tipton: Initially, my hopes and aspirations were to be a professional cricketer. I played England Under 19 for two years and was invited on to the staff at Lancashire County Cricket Club for a year before deciding which career path to take. My options were to do dentistry at Sheffield University or to do a general science degree at Durham University. Despite the strong focus on cricket at Durham, I opted for dentistry with a view to joining the Lancashire staff in the summer vacations. Eventually, when it came to choosing between cricket and dentistry, and I made a compromise and went into my dental career but also played part time for Cheshire County Cricket Club.

Euro Dental Depot: What do you enjoy most about your job?

Prof. Paul Tipton: “The aspect I must enjoy about my job is the variety. I’ve been fortunate to have the position in dentistry where my business life comprises of clinical dentistry on the one hand which I still do one to two days per week taking referrals for complex restorative, implant and cosmetic dentistry treatment from my referral network. Most of them have been on my courses and refer to me at one of my three clinical venues: Manchester, Warrington, and London. The second aspect in my job is teaching. I have been privileged to teach over 100 dentists since the early 90s. I also maintain a consultancy practice whereby dentist and dental companies work with me to help increase their profitability, and finally, I also do expert witness work. If I was to be asked which of those is the most enjoyable, I would probably say the teaching, as it takes me all around the world. In the last few years, I’ve taught in Australia, Singapore, South Africa, Dubai, India to name quite a few, and also set up a Dental Academy in Dubai, from which we teach all over the Middle East.”

Euro Dental Depot: What do you consider to be the most important development in dentistry during your career?

Prof. Paul Tipton: I think there have been several very important developments, the first of which was Professor Brånemark and dental implants. My first dental implant course was in 1986, so I have been involved now for over 30 years in the implantology field. The advantages for treatments it now gives to patients is quite remarkable. The second big improvement has been with orthodontics and all-round of the newer style of bondedagents which minimizes preparation required to dentistry. The third major innovation, the one which is currently much in vogue and is still being developed is that of digital dentistry, CAD/CAM. The last one, and it might surprise a few people, is the material called ‘straining’ from Opitdent which has revolutionized restorative technics and soft tissue manipulation in prosthodontics.”

Euro Dental Depot: What advice would you give young dentists?

Prof. Paul Tipton: The advice I would give young dentists would be to make sure that they get as many postgraduate qualifications and education as possible. We live in a world of increasing competition. Knowledge is power. The only way in which the dentist can then fight for the best jobs in private practice is to show that they have done the relevant postgraduate courses, have upgraded their skills and that they have some form of certification, diploma or masters degree to show for this. The Tipton Training Alumni are always asking for “Tipton-trained” dentists to work for them.

Who do you consider the most influential person to you in your dental career and why?

Prof. Paul Tipton: “That’s an easy one. The first person is Mike Wise. In 1982, the first postgraduate course I went to was called ‘Occlusion for the General Dental Practitioner’ and it was run by Mike Wise. After that presentation, I enrolled and completed his one-year restorative dentistry courses for the next four years. On his prompting, I then went to the Eastman Dental School and achieved a masters degree in conservative dentistry.”

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What do you enjoy outside dentistry?

My passion outside of dentistry has been cricket. Over the years, I have been fortunate to play for both Lancashire and Cheshire, and I enjoy watching cricket wherever I can. I’m a member of the MCC and so go down to Lords on a regular basis to watch the test matches there. I also enjoy playing golf, travel, and of course, my family.”

What do you think are your views on where the profession is heading at this moment in time?

Prof. Paul Tipton: “I feel is at a crossroads, and that crossroads is there because of the problems that have been evident to everybody with the General Dental Council and the increased amounts of litigation. It is essential that young dentists spend more time in postgraduate education, are ethical and keep good dental records. It is also important that they learn the skills of communication and treatment planning so that they can give the relevant consent. Defensive dentistry, which is now being practiced by many dentists is not good for the patients.”

What has been the most enjoyable course you have attended since qualifying and why?

The most enjoyable course that I have attended was in 1986 when I attended a Brånemark implant course in Sweden. From there, I went on to work in the field of implantology at a time when few dentists and few patients had ever heard of dental implants.”

If you had your time again, would there be any different... anything you would change in your career?

If I had my time again, I would specialize at an earlier age I was in NHS general practice for nine years before going the Eastman and going on to become a specialist in private practice. Whilst I do not feel that those years were wasted, I could have accelerated my career pathway by spending less time in NHS general practice and gone down to the Eastman much earlier.”

And finally, what is your favourite holiday destination?

At this stage, I would probably say Dubai because it is part holiday and also part business. Currently, I go to Dubai approximately six times a year for two weeks each time for teaching. I have set up the Tipton Training Academy in conjunction with CAPP, my partner in the Middle East. From Dubai, we plan to expand into most of the other Middle Eastern countries and are doing our first courses in Saudi Arabia in the new year. I very much enjoy the lifestyle and the sunshine that Dubai has to offer.”

Editorial note: The article has been originally published on Euro Dental Depot website.