When disaster strikes. . .

When a flash flood brought havoc to a London dental practice, the Group's Operations' Director sought help from the professionals and the team from Henry Schein Minerva rose to the challenge.

Juggling with all the normal run-of-the-mill, day-to-day problems that arise in every dental practice can sometimes be a headache. Multiply these issues by 4 practices, as in the case of Dental Arts Studio and you may think the job impossible, but when catastrophe strikes without warning, life can become very tough indeed. So when floods brought chaos to much of London and 45 minutes of rising water wreaked havoc with the Clapham branch of Dental Arts Studios, the practice was fortunate to have Operations' Director Sharon Holmes at the helm. With the help and support of the team from Henry Schein Minerva, Sharon, who was voted Practice Manager of the Year 2007 by the BDPMA, helped re-build the practice from scratch and establish it as the Group's flagship branch.

Originally a trainee medical staff nurse, Sharon's switch to dentistry was prompted by her need to merge her working and family life. She spent 14 years as a dental nurse in her native South Africa, gaining experience in all kinds of dentistry. Her move to the UK in 2002 further improved her knowledge and exposed her to life in both NHS and private practice. Finally, a chance meeting with founders of Dental Arts Studio; Dr Yogesh Solanki and Dr Sunit Malhan in 2005, forged a relationship that ultimately provided Sharon with the challenge of a lifetime.

Although at this point Sharon had little experience in practice management, she maintained an appreciation of the need for "procedure" and understood the importance of implementing systems within a dental practice. She now defines her role as "everything that makes the practice work." And, as Operations' Director, works with the individual Practice Managers in each of the 4 partnership practices, to ensure the systems that she has developed are rigorously followed in areas covering all elements of human resources, training, recruiting and practice procedures, all conducted in line with BDA guidelines. So, when disaster struck and the water levels rose, Sharon was right in the thick of it. The Clapham practice was completely flooded from the basement upwards. The flood destroyed all the surgeries and the equipment in them, there was little choice but to gut the whole practice and refurbish from top to bottom.

"To see everything you have worked on for 4 years in ruins is a very emotional experience, I had put my heart and soul into helping develop the practice and was very committed to its success. When I received the phone call from the Practice Manager I was distraught and when I saw the practice for myself on the Monday, the reality of the situation dawned on me. There was so much to think about I didn’t know where to start."

Dr Solanki and Dr Malhan were also devastated and along with Sharon they began to plan for the future. As a mixed NHS/private practice, one of their chief concerns was that whilst the practice was closed, patients might leave in search of care elsewhere, and despite trying to re-direct patients to the other practices in the Dental Arts Studio Group, Sharon knew they were working against the clock from the very beginning.

"Dan was amazing, he played an enormous role in the refurbishment, he was always on the end of the phone or willing to visit us, offering support, advice or just a friendly chat. I really don't know how I would have managed the project without him. He became so much part of our team we even invited him to our Christmas party!"

The team at Henry Schein Minerva worked tirelessly to deliver exactly what we wanted from the refurbishment. They listened, understood our vision and interpreted our needs perfectly. Of course cost was a consideration, as was our ability to work in partnership with the suppliers and on all aspects Henry Schein Minerva came out top."

It gave her a blank canvas on which to create a new practice, they have a new team, eager to deliver patient care of the highest quality and a future about which she and the rest of the team are very enthusiastic.

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Dental Arts Studio Clapham finally re-opened at the end of 2007 and Sharon is now able to think about the flood as something of an opportunity.