Satisfying the ‘girly swot’ in me

Elaine Halley begins her blog as a student on the inaugural online MSc in Restorative & Aesthetic Dentistry from Smile-on and The University of Manchester

Three children, a private practice, a new practice opening imminently and having just finished my year as President of the British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry – what more do I need than the opportunity to take on an MSc?

Having joined General Practice as soon as I qualified, and having spent tens of thousands of pounds and travelled the world in search of CPD, I was disappointed to find that when the Faculty of General Dental Practitioners launched their Certificate in Aesthetic Dentistry, I didn’t qualify to take part. ‘Academically’ I didn’t have enough points for entry onto the course. By choosing to educate myself as was appropriate for the development of my practice, not through the hospital system or having a part-time MSc to my name and despite the fact that I have been teaching, writing and lecturing for years on many aspects of restorative ‘cosmetic’ dentistry, I wasn’t eligible.

Ego

Maybe it was just my ego that was hurt. The course in its original format was abandon ed and I carried on with life. I briefly researched the options for an MSc but nothing excited me and the financial burden of having to leave the practice part-time with all the other plates I had spinning just didn’t seem worth it. I live on a farm in Perths hire. I travel a lot for the sake of my young family and like all working parents, need to spend my time wisely.

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A distance learning MSc in Restorative and Aesthetic Dentistry utilising IT was right up my street. I must confess to a certain amount of excitement – I’ve always been a bit of a girly swot. I had a job to do in convincing those around me that I had the time, but with a two year old ready for nursery and my other two at school, and the flexibility of being able to watch lectures on-line – perfect for a multi-tasking working mum!

Delicate balance

And so – I found myself stirring the mince and supervising homework, whilst balancing my laptop on the kitchen worktop, listening and watching with one eye on the esteemed Dr Berkovitz discuss the marvels of human gross anatomy – with the cries of ‘Mummy – are those real dead people? That’s disgusting!’ My husband walked in, shook his head – are those real dead people? That’s disgusting!’ My husband walked in, shook his head and went back out on his tractor to fix things.

Meanwhile, two months into the course and I have been on a journey back to wonders of second year gross and dental anatomy – Sharpey’s fibres, Striae of Retzius, keratogenous cellular cementum – all these wonders of nature that 18 years of second year gross and dental anatomy – Sharpey’s fibres, Striae of Retzius, keratogenous cellular cementum – all these wonders of nature that 18 years in general practice had hammered into the dark recesses of my mind!

There have been a few technical and administrative hitches with the technology along the way – but the concept is amazing, and Smile-on should be congratulated for embracing technology to allow those of us who live outside the major educational regions to access learning in this way.

Action list

I must confess, even at this early stage to being a tad behind with the lectures and self-assessments. Half-term skiing holidays and the new practice opening haven’t helped. But, I have my on-line action list at the University of Manchester web portal (I wonder if I can get a student railcard again?). My plan is to intensively study and catch up... I’ll let you know how it goes!

About the author

Elaine Halley BDS, MDS (UK) is the BACD Immediate Past President and the principal of Cherrybank Dental in Perth. She is an active member of the AACD and her main interest in cosmetic and advanced restorative dentistry and she has studied extensively in the United States, Europe and the UK.