Colourful perception and 50 shades of grey
Ken Harris provides a colourful update on the MSc

Well, six months have passed in the blink of an eye... and I don’t feel a day older. However, I have recently been forced to face up to reality as Smile-on has posted mug shots of all the MSc delegates on the website. I’m told you are getting older when the policemen look young, but what about the dentists, they all look so young! Wonder what they think of me?

Anyway, we’ve picked up speed since first embarking upon the joys of dental anatomy back in January, sprinting headlong through patient communication and management issues, and galloping ever onwards towards treatment planning, with a necessary genuflection at the altar of informed consent and legal matters. Consequently we’ve landed with an almighty bump at the conclusion of module two, hot, moist and breathless (yuck!) but allegedly tooled up and ready for anything that might come our way.

We have had six months of serious teaching and learned reading to keep us all occupied, and we are now ready to come out swinging as lean, mean aesthetic dental machines.

The phoney war is over, and now it’s time to get down and dirty with the hand piece; I do love the smell of burning dentine in the morning! The upcoming module has us showing off our clinical skills in the shape of our first clinical case reports, and there is nowhere to hide; especially with our new found dental photography skills.

However, before the diamond hits the enamel, I must tell you that as a finale to module two we have had to write our first proper essay. It’s been 50 years since I last penned 1,500 words to this standard, and I must admit that I have felt the ominous spectre of “academic writing” seeking me like the eye of Mordor, since I began this course. I faced the task with much trepidation, but I was determined not to let it devour me whole. Yes, perhaps I have been reading a little too much Newton Fahl back in 2005. Anyway after numerous false starts, I managed to stop eating the lotus flowers and began upon my own epic essay. After avoiding Scylla & Charybdis, sidestepping the Cyclops, and getting an earful of the Sirens’ seductive song along the way, I finally made it home to Ithaca. Thankfully, my own personal Odyssey (odd essay?) did not take me 10 years, but it certainly took me a lot longer than I expected. We had to send in our completed manuscripts via the internet, and I suspect I was not the only one sweating over a hot laptop at two minutes to midnight on deadline day!

The webinars have still been coming fast and loose. Some good, and some not so good, but all have to be watched and inwardly digested as our “attendance” at these virtual lectures is strictly monitored by our tutors, and rightly so. Nevertheless, the sheer volume of work has made it tempting to perhaps cut a few corners and maybe miss out some lectures along the way. However, I can still hear the stern words of my old schoolmasters ringing in my ears; “remember, when you cheat you are only cheating yourself... now bend over Harris...” Somebody cheating yourself… now bend over I think of me?

Dr Gregory Brambilla is a clinician whose work I have admired for some time now; he really is a true artist with composite resin, right up there with the likes of Didier Dietself and Lorenzo Vannini in my humble opinion; I do feel I have some experience in this field having spent a week in Brazil with the great Newton Fahl back in 2005. Anyway, imagine my delight to find him delivering a webinar lecture, live from his private practice in Milan, even if it was only on shade and colour science. However, he is the first person I’ve heard who can actually explain just what is meant by the term “value” when applied to tooth colour. He really brought a potentially dry subject to life, and his infectious enthusiasm was, well... infectious!

It’s surprising what influences our colour perception, even the colour of our surgery walls. I was surprised at the recommendation to re-paint them every three years, and even more surprised to discover that Oliver Harman (resident teacher’s pet) already does just that!!! It’s amazing what secrets people reveal about themselves on this course; who needs Face book?

The next live webinar promises to be a real crack up with Dr Brambilla talking about “Advanced Anterior composite Techniques”. Does it get much better than this? Except perhaps a week in Brazil... (apologises Newton!!)

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