Dental Foundation Training
A review of Amit Rai’s book by James Bannister

Blind spots tend to go unnoticed until it’s rather too late. Take choosing a career – most people would agree that to enter into a profession, one has to take a relevant course at university. Which is true, for the most part (apprenticeships are an oft overlooked alternative), but then comes the big question: what happens between university and that first job? Like a movie with a missing scene, people often just assume there’s a jump cut from graduation to the start of your chosen career. In truth, it’s a lot more complicated than that; no less so in Dentistry.

Dental Foundation Training: The essential handbook for foundation dentists is precisely that: an essential handbook detailing quite literally everything you will need to know during your transition from undergraduate study to unsupervised performance.

The book employs a very thorough, concise writing style not dissimilar to a journal article, and wastes no time in bringing the reader up to speed on the details of foundation training – one is quickly informed of what it is, its purpose and how to secure a place on the scheme. Substantial detail is also provided on its technicalities, such as the role of your supervisor and what to do if you miss assessment. This survival guide aspect to the book’s nature shines throughout – one tip later on to set up a code word with your nurse to alert a supervisor mid-procedure, or tips for dentists. I would stop just short of calling it “essential,” but it’s nothing less than invaluable.

After detailing the purpose of foundation training, the book goes on to describe general dental practice with particular respect to NHS dentistry, complete with a checklist of things to do in preparation for your first day of practice. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are dedicated to describing the teaching process, curriculum and assessment involved in foundation training, and the latter half of the book discuss the future following foundation training – potential career paths, dento-legal considerations (with a particular focus on how to avoid being sued) and a general survival guide for your years as a foundation dentist. Indeed, the advice given in these last few chapters has universal application, such as how to respond to a complaint not just in terms of formal proceedings, but in terms of personal development and growth.

Equal parts textbook and syllabus, Dental Foundation Training acts as a catch-all guide to a year of functional dental training, providing advice on every step of your journey from university into the dental profession (including a substantial portion on potential career paths following training). However, while comparatively easy to read, the scientific journal writing style may not appeal to all readers. Abbreviations are ubiquitous, for example, and it can prove challenging to memorise every single one. While there is an abbreviations section to help with this, it merely adds a secondary problem of having to constantly flick back-and-forth in order to make sense of some sentences.

Overall, the type of reader that would benefit from this most would be a graduate dental student keen to make the most of their career. The book is filled with good advice, and acts as a consolidated library of information regarding training, development, and the subsequent career possibilities for dentists. I would stop just short of calling it “essential,” but it’s nothing less than invaluable.