

Seizing the right opportunities

Dental nurse **Lizzie Boon** is a Quality Assurance Auditor for the National Examining Board of Dental Nurses (NEBDN). She walks us through her career in dentistry

Dental nursing was never an option as a career choice. However, when I left school I started working in an office, which lasted all of two days. The following day, I was looking in the paper and saw an advert for a trainee orthodontic nurse in the practice where I had my orthodontic treatment. I applied for the job on Wednesday, had the interview Thursday and then started on the Monday. After a few months, a new senior dental nurse started, who had worked at the Royal London Hospital, started at the practice as our practice manager. She mentioned that she had trained at the Royal London and that if I enjoyed what I was doing then I could get a qualification in dental nursing. After some thought, I applied and was surprised when I was accepted on to the course. The course started in October 1990. I left the orthodontic practice after a year with every intention of going back if I passed all my training. It was a big if!

Training

The first two weeks was our induction weeks. These come and went with little or no problems, apart from the thoughts of getting lost in the hospital and not knowing where we were or what I was doing. We were in pairs, so that made it a little easier, but then we found to our horror we were split up on our individual departments. I remember sitting in a class one day listening to my tutor at the time teaching us about the heart thinking: 'Gosh, I could never do what she does; I just would not remember it all.' The weeks passed to months and we all rotated around our departments. Six months later, a new group of trainees started and I was faced with mock examinations and final examinations. I successfully qualified as a dental surgery assistant with my Hospital Certificate of Proficiency in September 1991. From this I was offered a position within the hospital in the department of Conservative Dentistry, which I accepted. I then sat and passed my National Certificate in Dental Surgery Assisting in November 1991.

Experience

Over the weeks, months and indeed years, I worked within the department, gaining



knowledge and experience working with different clinicians as well as working alongside dental undergraduates. As time passed, other opportunities developed within the hospital. My first real turning point was when I was asked to fill in at a local college for an evening. The topic was sterilisation so, luckily for me, one that I was happy teaching. One night became two then three and then, before I knew it, I was teaching one evening a week. It was then I decided that I wanted to undertake some form of teaching qualification. After a few discussions with both my tutor at the hospital and my tutor at the college I decided to apply to complete my Further Adult Education Teaching Certificate (FAETC). Once I completed my FAETC, I then went on to complete the second year of my Certificate in Education. At work, I took the opportunity to become an acting senior dental nurse in the prosthetics department and decided to change departments at the end of the three months. Whilst I was not offered the position, I stayed in the department that, in turn, exposed me to a different patient group and way of working.

Training trainees

I then became the first floor clinical trainer within the department and my role was to train the trainee dental nurses on the first floor. From this, I took the position of acting senior dental nurse on the new dental emergency clinic, whilst a challenging and exciting position I decided not to apply for the permanent position but to return to the prosthetic department.

My next opportunity came when I applied for the infection control post within the hospital, which was sponsored by Septodont. This was a change in direction but again a challenging one. My role was to improve the infection control within the hospital as well as working with Septodont demonstrating the use of the then 'Saftey Plus' system. This was an amazing opportunity and I was lucky to visit some fantastic locations with Septodont, as well as develop a better awareness of infection control. The opportunities kept coming to develop myself within the hospital and this included undertaking my D32/33 Trainer Assessor award followed by my D34 Internal

Verifier award. By this time I had also completed my Oral Health Education qualification.

Tutor

After several years, I applied and became one of the Dental Nurse Tutors as well as a trainer/ assessor and Internal Verifier for our Trainee Dental Nurses. This took me away from the chairside environment however developments within the hospital allowed the Dental Nurse Training Team to become more involved in the training of the Dental Undergraduates. While not the same as working chairside with a clinician, this was rewarding on other ways. My final position within the team was that of Dental Undergraduate Clinical Support Co-ordinator/ Senior Tutor Dental Nurse. I progressed to obtain my LCGI in Education and Training as well as the LCGI in Dental Nursing, however my most personal achievement was gaining my MCGI in Education. This was a two-year

process of completing a dissertation and then attending an interview. However, at the end of the process instead of being awarded my GCGI this was reviewed and I was awarded the higher level to an MCGI in Education. To this day, I still wonder how I managed to achieve this. I had an amazing time working at the Royal London Hospital. However, in 2009 I decided that after nearly 20 years it was time to move on. I saw the position for a Quality Assurance Auditor with the NEBDN advertised and, after speaking to my line manager, I decided to apply for the position. Following an interview, I was offered the position.

End and a beginning

It was then I realised that my time at the hospital was finally coming to an end. I had an amazing time at the hospital. I had worked with some amazing people and made some wonderful friend, however it was time to move on. On 2

January 2010 I started as a full time Quality Assurance Auditor at the NEBDN. This was a different direction to what I ever thought I would take, however once I found my feet the days went to weeks and then to months. Before I knew it, I had been there a year.

Working for NEBDN was a different challenge as every day was different. No one audit visit was the same, however the biggest challenge was working from home. I had been used to being surrounded by people to then just me and a telephone, that was the biggest challenge but over time I adapted to the different way of working. I have been in the profession for nearly 27 years and I don't think I would change anything. Dental nursing for me has changed from a job to a profession with real development opportunities. I have no idea what the future holds however the profession is constantly changing. What lies in 2017? We will all just have to wait and see.

What the NEBDN does

The NEBDN provides guidance that all course providers need to meet in order to deliver training towards any NEBDN qualification. Course providers must show they can meet these standards prior to accreditation by NEBDN before students can be entered for a qualification leading to GDC registration or towards continuing professional development.

The GDC states that:

- A primary qualification is only the first step in their education and development which should last throughout their professional life.
- We require all registrants to undertake continuing professional development (CPD) to maintain their registration. This is because we believe CPD makes a contribution to supporting registrants to maintain our Standards and to patient protection.
- CPD for dentists and DCPs is defined in law as activity that contributes to their professional development and is relevant to their practice or intended practice.

Accreditation of education and training programmes helps to ensure that course providers have the necessary systems for planning, delivering and evaluating their programmes to meet the requirements of:

- The NEBDN in relation to the content, outcomes and structure of the programmes,
- The GDC for the statutory regulation of dental nurses,
- The diverse needs of students,
- Education and training provision is educationally and socially inclusive and promotes equality,
- There are sufficient resources and appropriate environments for the effective delivery of both academic and practical education and training,
- Education and training provision is effectively managed and quality assured.

Role of course providers

To provide the theoretical knowledge required to undertake the final examination and to support the student in achieving the clinical experience necessary to complete the qualification.

Accreditation of providers aims to:

- Ensure all dental care professionals (DCPs) have attained the highest standards of training possible.
- Make available high quality learning opportunities and experiences to all students to enable them to achieve the highest standards.

Consultancy

The NEBDN offers bespoke consultancy visits to current and potential course providers. This is especially beneficial to a new course provider who is considering delivering the NEBDN Diploma in Dental Nursing or any of the post registration qualifications; however this is not exclusively for new course providers. As part of the organisation's commitment to Quality Assurance, consultants have an in-depth appreciation and knowledge of the Quality Assurance standards as well as a wealth of teaching practice, management experience and dental knowledge. In total the consultant can provide both a personal and professional approach, which gives course providers an analytical review of current or proposed policies and procedures leading to the Accreditation of training.