

## MY DAY IN PRACTICE

# Hannah Flynn

I don't have one typical working day as such – I run the practice with my husband Seamus, and we split the week in the practice between us. On Mondays, I work from 10am to 1pm, while on Thursdays and Fridays I work from 9am until 8pm.

We are open four evenings a week – so far we've resisted opening on Saturdays!



**Hannah Flynn BChD, MFGDP (UK) is joint principal of Flynn's Dental Care in Tralee, County Kerry. Flynn's Dental Care won Practice of the Year for the Republic of Ireland (South) and Best Employer at the 2012 Irish Dentistry Awards, as well as earning Highly Commended in several categories.**

Seamus and I work part-time so we can be there for our two children (aged eight and seven), before and after school and for their after-school activities.

It also means I have time at home on a Tuesday and Wednesday morning to do the administration and management of the practice. There is almost as much work in running the practice as there is clinical work.

There's a commitment when you're the owner of a practice to ensure that it runs smoothly. You have a responsibility to your staff to make sure they're happy, and to your patients to provide a high-quality service.

Every Monday morning I have a half-hour meeting with my practice manager, Lisa. She is key to the running of the business and oversees all the daily activities.

We start by discussing any issues from the previous week that need resolving before we look at what in the coming week needs attention, and we set a date for completion.

Lisa and I often work on longer-term projects – at the moment we're creating a news section for our website and making our patient leaflets available to download.

### IMPLEMENTING IDEAS

I really enjoy the management that goes with running a practice.

We bought our practice in 2005. Fortunately, Seamus had owned practices in the UK before we moved back here in 2004, as I had no prior experience of running a business.

Once we had settled in here, we were able to get an idea of where we saw the practice going and implement our ideas.

We did a lot of things like rebranding the business and refurbishing the whole practice. We were seeing a lot of patients

who were choosing extractions over root canals because they couldn't afford the treatment, so we decided to really focus on prevention.

We extended our hygienist service, which has been invaluable and helps to encourage regular attendance. We also wrote a series of patient leaflets on diet advice, denture advice and detailed instructions on toothbrushing and flossing for our patients to take home with them after their visit.

### STRIKING THE BALANCE

I've had to put some plans on hold this year, because Seamus and I are both studying for an MSc in Restorative and Aesthetic Dentistry from the University of Manchester.

The MSc is certainly worthwhile, but it does put time constraints on our management of the practice. It's very difficult to do a Master's and push the practice forward at the same time.

The course is great for us in that it's mainly distance learning. It's a two-year intensive course, with three residentials in the UK. There's a two-hour webinar every week, and you have to submit essays, a dissertation, and 13 clinical cases.

It's been a great thing to do, but it's really hard work – most of it gets done when the children have gone to bed.

I've found that the MSc has been a really





good way to ensure we are up-to-date with current thinking, and it's good to talk to other dentists who are on the course as well. We bought a Canon camera for our case studies, and getting accurate photographs has been a steep learning curve!

That said, showing our patients a before and after photograph has been really positive and I would like to compile a photograph album for our waiting room to show other patients what is possible within the practice.

It's been hard at times to achieve a balance between the clinical dentistry and the running of a practice. At the moment, I have a great team behind me that can manage the practice on my behalf. Without them, I wouldn't have been able to take on the MSc and keep the practice running at the level it has been.

### AWARDS AND REWARDS

It sounds a bit clichéd, but having a good team is very important. We have a staff meeting every two or three weeks, where everyone gets involved in the running of the practice and especially in developing new ideas. It's also a chance for everyone to meet, as many of us are part-time. If there are any joint decisions to be made, this is when we make them.

There's been a real buzz in the practice since we got back from the Irish Dentistry Awards. The team are over the moon to have

won the awards that we did. We didn't really think about getting beyond the shortlist – that was such an achievement in itself.

For me, entering the awards was a chance to showcase our practice in a way that we'd never had the opportunity to do before.

I really wanted to do something for the team, which is mainly why we entered.

It's one thing when your employers encourage and appreciate you, but it was lovely to see the staff get external recognition for all the hard work they put into the practice every day.

I also think the awards are a great way of analysing your practice. It gives you the chance to focus on what you're doing already, and what your plans are for the future. For us, it's highlighted certain areas that we can work on, too.

We've put our plaques on the wall in reception. A lot of our patients knew we had been shortlisted for the awards, and they've been really supportive – they wrote some lovely testimonials for our entry, and they were delighted when we won. Some of them have even bought us bunches of flowers!

In these difficult financial times, it's been a real boost to our practice.

One of the main challenges we face is patients struggling to pay for dental care, and the recent restrictions to government schemes have only compounded this.

We now provide dental and hygiene

appointments four evenings a week, which has helped to expand our patient base and this has been popular with our patients who cannot afford to take time off work.

### FOCUS ON PREVENTION

We treat patients under the PRSI and Medical Card schemes, as well as offering private work.

The majority of our work is routine dental care; there's not a big demand for some high-end treatment, although we do offer it.

On a typical day, I would see many different patients. Today, for example, I fitted a veneer on a peg-shaped upper lateral incisor for a 21-year-old patient. He had just finished orthodontics and it was the last stage in his treatment.

I then saw two children for their six-monthly dental health examination. They are members of the Preventative Dental Care Plan we introduced in 2010, and both saw our hygienist afterwards, who helped them with their brushing techniques, reinforced any necessary dietary advice and polished their teeth.

Our whole focus now is on prevention – to hopefully see patients, restore them to dental health, and then prevent them from needing dental treatment in future. **ID**

## IRISH DENTISTRY 2013 Awards

Could you be the next big winner at the Irish Dentistry Awards? The 2013 ceremony will be held on 1 February in Dublin – register your interest in entering now and we will contact you with an entry form as soon as they are available. To enter, simply email [karen.sherwood@fmc.co.uk](mailto:karen.sherwood@fmc.co.uk).

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