

STRIVING TO IMPROVE

Written by Tariq Bashir



Voted most invaluable team member at last year's Private Dentistry Awards, dedicated dentist Tariq Bashir highlights the importance of excellent support staff and the need to constantly learn and improve

Can you tell us a bit about your background?

TB: I was born and brought up in Glasgow and I am the eldest of five. My parents are originally from Pakistan and settled here in Glasgow in the early eighties. After finishing my studies at Glasgow University, I obtained the MFDS from the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow whilst working as an SHO in a maxillofacial surgery rotation in Glasgow. I then worked in Dundee as an SHO and completed further rotations in OMFS and restorative dentistry. After this I moved back to Glasgow and was fortunate to have been selected as an associate at the prestigious Visage Clinic in Glasgow where I have been for the last eight years!



Recently I have been assisting my good friend and mentor Dr Attiq Rahman on his highly regarded 'Precision crown preparation' course. Teaching dentists is a different challenge but again very rewarding to see colleagues improve and develop and ultimately this benefits our patients.

We both also had the opportunity to lecture to Palestinian dentists on a recent trip to the West Bank in Palestine.

Why is training and investing in yourself important to you?

TB: I find further training and development is essential to ensure you are delivering the best results to your patient. I have always tried to stay abreast of current developments and techniques and over the years have invested heavily in post graduate education. I am always learning and I feel this keeps my passion for dentistry alive. I have travelled extensively recently to seek out the best teachers in dentistry. So far this year I have travelled to USA, Switzerland and South Africa and spent hundreds of hours training.

What have been your best decisions? In hindsight, would you have done anything differently?

TB: I believe everything happens for a reason so I try to stay positive and think there is something to be learnt from every experience, whether we feel it's good or bad.

When I graduated I had plans to try and follow the specialist restorative pathway but I feel accepting the post at Visage was one of the best decisions I have made. I am able to

perform the type of dentistry I enjoy to the highest standards.

The only thing I would have done different professionally is that I would have embarked upon further training before I had children. Having a young family makes the work/life juggle more difficult. However, I am fortunate to have a very supportive wife, who is also a dentist, and understands my desire to continually improve my skills.

You won quite a few awards at last year's Private Dentistry Awards – what do you think is the secret to your success and how has winning helped you?

TB: Last December my colleagues at Visage Clinic and I were honoured to be recognised as the Best Private Practice UK. Although I was also grateful to the judging panel in selecting me as the Most Invaluable Team Member 2015, dentistry is a team effort and I can't do the work I do on my own. I feel this is the secret to our success. We have excellent support staff from the dental nurses, front of house team and management. The whole team always

strive to ensure we are doing everything we do to the best standard possible and pride ourselves on our customer service and patient experience at Visage. I feel our great run at last year's awards ceremony has helped tremendously with marketing, especially for anxious and nervous patients who have been delaying treatment.

This also reassures current patients who can see we work to the highest standards possible. Many patients have noticed our success at the Private Dentistry Awards and its always a great discussion point. Winning has also raised team spirits even further as we know we have been recognised for these accolades by our peers. We are always striving to improve and never accept second best.

How important is patient communication to you?

TB: Communication is critical. Nowadays with digital dentistry, patients are much better informed with resources such as CBCT scanning, intra-oral photography and digital smile design. These developments have made

patient, clinician and lab communication much easier. I use photography to explain dental issues to every new patient. Like they say, a picture speaks a thousand words!

Due to the challenging nature of the work in our clinic the more we can inform the patients about the final result and the procedures they are undergoing, the better.

How do you stay abreast of modern techniques?

TB: As I mentioned previously, I have invested a lot of time and money attending prestigious dental courses which have provided me with the most up-to-date knowledge and practical skills I feel are necessary for continual improvement.

In addition, learning via social media, Facebook dental forums and Whatsapp groups is an excellent way for dental colleagues to network and exchange ideas and tips instantly and perhaps learn from other colleagues experiences. I run the Glasgow BACD study clubs and this has helped me to bring great national speakers to our regional meetings.



These evening are most invaluable for networking and meeting other colleagues and I have personally benefited greatly from these evenings.

My colleagues in the clinic joke that I am away on courses more than I am at the clinic but I feel it's important to improve and learn from the best in the field. I have attended many courses over the years and learnt from fantastic clinicians from around the world. These included composite masters Dr Newton Fahl, Dr Didier Dietschi and bonding guru Professor Pascal Magne.

However, working through the Kois Continuum in Seattle has made a massive difference to my dentistry. Dr John Kois is a walking encyclopedia of dentistry and has been a great source of knowledge and encouragement.

Professionally, what are you most proud of?

TB: I am grateful and privileged to be part of the dental profession. Dentistry can have negative connotations for many people. Hence, it is easy to forget we carry out invaluable work in helping patients not only maintain good oral health but we can have an immense impact in improving self confidence and self esteem. In some cases this can give the patient a whole new outlook on life. Changing smiles really can be life changing for some patients. This is what makes my work worthwhile and gives me true job satisfaction, hence why I love my job! However, the most satisfaction I get is being privileged enough to help those less fortunate than us through dental aid trips.

Where do you get your motivation and drive from?

TB: I rely heavily on my faith and as a Muslim I am always grateful to God for the blessings he has given me.

My father and mother worked long hours running a newsagents and a post office all whilst bringing up five children. Being the eldest, I used to help out at weekends and school holidays throughout secondary school. Watching my parents struggle and always pushing me to work hard and try my best in everything I do instilled a strong work ethic in me. I wanted to show my parents their efforts and sacrifices had not gone to waste.

I see the work of my mentor and esteemed colleague, Dr Attiq Rahman in the room next to me. This without a doubt is daily motivation for me to try and reach a better level with each patient I treat.

How do you relax in your spare time? How do you balance work and family life?

TB: I admit I am not the best at balancing work and life. As my wife says, I live, breathe and dream dentistry! I also have a keen interest in art, especially painting but unfortunately



with work and family commitments the only painting I have managed recently is the garden fence!

What lessons have you learned in the course of your career?

TB: One of the main lessons I have learnt is to stay humble and remember we all started as dental students. No one is born with knowledge and we all learn by sharing.

I feel it is essential we try and give back to the community. We are fortunate to be in a respected and comfortable position. A couple of years ago after the Gaza conflict in Palestine I felt impelled to help in any way I could. Some dental friends and I felt it was best to use the skills we have to provide free dental treatment to children in Palestine that do not have any access to it. We set up a dental charity called Dental Aid Network and in December 2014 we took a team of ten dentists during the Christmas break and treated over 200 children-carrying out preventive treatments, extractions and basic restorations.

Since then we have also had a successful trip to Kashmir in October last year. Later this year we are planning further trips to Palestine and Kashmir.

Do you have any regrets? What has been your biggest mistake?

TB: Professionally I wish I had completed the KOIS course earlier in my career as it has made a great impact on how I practice dentistry.

What are your plans for the future?

TB: Improving my skillset further goes without saying and I will always find areas of weakness and seek out appropriate training. Apart from clinical dentistry, I would like to see Dental Aid Network develop further and we can hopefully help many more needy children around the world. I am also hoping to assist some friends organise medical equipment for hospitals we visited during our trip to Palestine-there is so much more we can do. In addition to this I am looking to provide further local dental services to the homeless and other groups in the community who have no access to dental treatment.

I have always had a passion for aviation and if I wasn't a dentist I would have liked to be a pilot. I am hoping at some point in the near future I can obtain my private pilot's licence.

However, all of the above will be going on hold in the next few months as we are expecting a new addition to the family - back to nappies! ●

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