

# West End pearl

Reena Ahluwalia opens up the doors of her precious new practice.



After completing vocational training in 1992, I fell on my feet by landing an associate position at Covent Garden. It is the only place I have ever worked as a dentist; everything about it was right and I never considered moving or, indeed, purchasing my own practice. I was completely happy. The principal, Andrew Kay, was more like a friend than a boss. However, when Andrew decided to sell in 2010, I took the opportunity to take over and purchase the practice. I am delighted that Andrew has stayed as a senior associate and gives me encouraging help and feedback.



**Reena Ahluwalia**

is practice principal at Covent Garden Dental Practice.

## Location

The Covent Garden Dental Practice has everything - great patients, dental team and location, and it is completely individual. It offers easy access to public transport and is situated in an area of charm, elegance, and exclusivity. Our patients are from a wide variety of occupations and backgrounds, including the performing arts, the business world, and many working people from the local restaurants and retail sectors. They all value quality dental care and personal service. Many have become friends and their visits are a chance to catch up with them as well as treat them. We are a bustling practice with seven dentists, two hygienists, a manager (who is also an internal CQC consultant and chartered business psychologist), an assistant manager, a receptionist and six nurses.

## High standards

When we took over, our first task was CQC compliance. The practice was already in line with CQC's recommendations, such as providing the highest standards of dentistry

and nurturing and supporting team members to develop their personal excellence in their work. Nevertheless, there were still many changes that needed to be implemented and required an enormous team effort. We decided from the outset to embrace the CQC. We installed a purpose-built decontamination room, a new office and found room for a fourth surgery. We have just completely refurbished two of the four surgeries and hope to do the same in the remaining two rooms. Being in the heart of Covent Garden - and in the midst of a residential complex - space is of a premium and there is no scope for extension or expansion. We have had to work within the existing area and optimise every square inch. We were initially advised it would not be possible to design a fourth surgery to fit into the space available. That's where Ian Gocking, from SPS Dental, came in.

## Perfect result

He planned, designed and advised us on how to utilise the space to maximum effect - the result gives the impression of being spacious. We

have four surgeries, a decontamination room, office, kitchen and reception area. With both surgeries, we wanted to maximise patient comfort and CQC standards in a contemporary yet ergonomic and clinical design with plenty of storage and space utilisation. Ian was an invaluable part of both of our projects from beginning to end. He worked alongside the builders to ensure every step of the process was on schedule and without problems. If any issues arose, they were dealt with efficiently and without the usual stress that building work involves. Ian spent a good deal of time ascertaining our

needs and expectations. His experience was obvious and his professional manner made the task much easier.

#### Ergonomic design

We visited the Takara Belmont showroom twice. Ian was adamant we should visit the showroom prior to finalising our choices on equipment and colours and took us round the showroom before both projects. It was the best way to visualise what we wanted as well as what we did not want. Having selected the Cleo for the first room, we did not hesitate to choose the same again. Being a knee break chair, it does not dominate the

room and is much more inviting to our clients. The rotating operators console is ergonomically designed for both the dentist and assistant. We spent days deliberating on colours for the chair, cabinets and worktops, trying to blend the three so there was some variety. The surgeries now look modern with everything to hand, it is easy to clean with lots of clever storage. Both projects took two weeks, but the practice remained open throughout both, with minimal disruption. It's difficult to imagine the old surgery, the new one has become the standard and the associates fight to use them, that has to be the best seal of approval.

## DCP research awards

Colgate DCP Research Awards, in partnership with the Oral Dental Research Trust (ODRT), support research of clinical relevance, carried out by dental care professionals, with special emphasis on preventive care. A maximum of four awards up to the value of £5,000 are presented annually.

The 2013 awardees were presented with their certificates by Prof Angus Walls, chair of the Oral Dental Research Trust, at a reception on the first day of the British Dental Conference in Excel, London. Professor Walls commented that, "The Colgate DCP Research Awards are unique in encouraging DCPs to embark on novel research of immediate clinical relevance to help build and strengthen the academic base of the entire dental team. This year the ODRT received a record number of applications, and this together with the high quality of applications for awards, demonstrates the valuable contribution DCPs can make towards research."

The 2013 awardees were:

Fiona Sandom – Dental hygienist/therapist and therapist tutor for North Wales, Cardiff University Dental Postgraduate Education Department submitted a research proposal entitled: 'An evaluation of the learning needs of dental care professionals to enable them to carry out extended duties'.

Susan Bissett – Research dental hygienist and team lead of the dental clinical research facility, School of Dental Sciences, Newcastle University submitted a research proposal entitled: 'A questionnaire survey exploring the knowledge and attitudes of UK healthcare professionals involved in the management of diabetes

towards the links between diabetes and periodontitis'.

Christine Cotton – Dental hygienist/therapist and BSc oral health science lead, School of Dentistry, University of Manchester submitted a research proposal entitled: 'Can dental care professionals screen for oral malignancy and pre-malignancy: a diagnostic test accuracy study'.

The Colgate DCP Research Awards offer all DCPs the opportunity to carry out research, and is an important introduction to research methodology for those who have never before been involved in research previously. A research team can be made up of all members of a general dental practice, including dental nurses, hygiene therapists and technicians and, and may also include a dentist as a mentor or supervisor. The call for 2014 applications which will be announced before the end of this year.



Christine Cotton, Fiona Sandom, Prof Angus Walls, Anousheh Alavi, Colgate-Palmolive (UK) Ltd, and Susan Bissett.