

# A united front

**Anna Middleton** speaks to *Oral Health* about why uniting as a workforce is so important in terms of patient care as well as business success



## Anna Middleton

Anna is a multi-award-winning dental hygienist. She studied at The Eastman Dental Hospital after working as a dental nurse, and graduated in 2015 from the Faculty of Royal College of Surgeons. She is the founder of London Hygienist, which has a mission to change the way oral healthcare is delivered to patients. Anna is a key opinion leader for Philips, a global Guided Biofilm Therapy ambassador for EMS Dental and a member of the British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy. Anna lectures, and writes regularly for both industry and consumer press.

### Why is now the time for hygienists to unite as a workforce?

Our role within dentistry is so crucial. When we educate and motivate our patients to adopt good oral hygiene habits, we are not only ensuring longevity for their teeth but also supporting the work the dentist may have carried out.

More patients are opting for cosmetic procedures such as composite bonding and adult orthodontics and being able to work as a team has never been more important.

With direct access having turned six on 1 May 2019, the increase in patients seeking our services is growing. My whole business model was built around utilising direct access to allow patients that freedom to access treatment. As a workforce, we are continuing to expand those services and to be able to work more freely.

By continuing to unite we can achieve further changes. I truly see the day that it will be compulsory for hygienists and therapists to be working fully supported with a nurse, to help us deliver the highest level of care to our patients.

### What can dental hygienists and therapists (DH&Ts) do to support National Smile Month (NSM)? What will you be doing?

My passion has always been to get the correct messages out there to the public. To do this, my focus is currently on achieving more consumer-facing press and using NSM as the perfect opportunity to pique the press and public interest in oral health.

I want to change the way dentistry is perceived by the nation and showcase how far we have come. For instance, I have been using guided biofilm therapy (GBT) from EMS, which patients love! It is minimally invasive and pain-free – which we all know has often been a barrier for patients seeking dental treatment.

There is no denying patients want a brighter, whiter smile and being able to offer a lifetime of pain-free treatment is fantastic.

### Looking beyond NSM, what can DH&Ts do to help improve oral health awareness?

Keep spreading the messages far and wide! Use all means possible. Using social media has been a fantastic tool for this and more DCPs and practices are utilising the various platforms out there not only to educate but also attract more patients.

Get involved in other activities too, such as the BSDHT's First Smiles Campaign, running in June, which focuses on children's oral health.

### How important is it to standardise dental hygiene care, in your opinion?

It is so important. Patients should have a good experience every time they see a DCP at any practice. DCPs need to be supported and able to work safely and effectively.

How we diagnose and treat patients is a standardised practice we learn while training and continue to develop after we qualify, but this can be compromised through working unsupported and in stressful circumstances.

### What would you like that standardisation to look like?

That every DCP always works with full nursing support. DCPs should be able to have access to all the instruments and equipment they need to carry out their work, too.

In the past, I have been denied instruments and products for cost reasons, even if it meant I could do my job more effectively and, most importantly, safely.

I think utilising the GBT protocol in practice is another fantastic way in which standardisation can be achieved. For example, for me, using GBT has reduced 20 minutes of 'scaling' down to around seven minutes of minimally invasive biofilm management. That gives more time in the appointment to focus on home care and, actually, an increase in turnover, as I am now able to treat more patients daily.

### What would you say to anyone who thinks dental hygienists should be followers rather than leaders?

Everyone in the team should be working in unity and harmony. Not to see the value of each individual and celebrate the strengths we all bring in our various roles is a tragedy and certainly a place I wouldn't want to work. We can all be leaders, and the best way to lead is by example.

I work very closely with the dentists and other team members in my practices. We sing each other's praises and promote the vital work we do. When you build up one another, it pays off in more ways than one. Morale will be high and business will boom.

### For any DH&T looking to make a positive change, what advice would you offer them?

Find what you are really passionate about and run with it. Find creative ways to share your information, whether it be online or out in the 'real' world. There are plenty of ways to do this. I regularly write blogs and articles, and now I have started making videos and collaborating with other DCPs to spread positivity and unity in our profession.

### How important is a team approach to dental hygiene care?

The difference between success and failure is a great team, and individual commitment to a group effort is what makes a team work.

No matter how smart, talented, driven or passionate you are, your success as a DCP depends on your ability to build and inspire. A successful leader is one who can spur his or her team members to work well together toward a common vision. [OH](#)



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