

Career Pathway

I graduated in 1995, completed a VT year and very quickly moved to Secondary Care, working as an OMFS SHO for 18 months. This was a decision primarily based on my shameful inability to take teeth out. I certainly didn't think at this point that Oral Surgery would end up being my chosen career path. After a year long 'Around the World' trip, I returned to Newcastle where there happened to be a vacant Staff Grade post available. I had the intention of moving after a few years when I had worked out what I really wanted to do, but found that the nature of the job very much suited me. At that time, I was working a one in 5 second on-call commitment, and was consequently dealing with facial trauma, as well as gaining considerable experience in dentoalveolar surgery. It was interesting, challenging, scary and quite often- fun. I never left!

I applied to join the Specialist List in Surgical Dentistry (now Oral Surgery) in 1999 through the grandfathering process, but the length of my experience within the specialty just fell short. I was advised to appeal, with a portfolio submission to prove equivalence to training. I submitted my portfolio and attended an interview with the GDC. Thankfully, I was successful in my appeal and granted admission onto the Specialist List that same day, in 2000.

I carried on working in the same unit, completing MFDS, and over time naturally developing autonomous working practices. I took on some small managerial roles, including audit lead, departmental monthly meeting coordinator, rota manager and interview panel member. Then, in 2007, I pursued regrading to Associate Specialist and just managed to sneak in before the grade was officially closed in 2008.

My SAS role and job plan has had many different incarnations over time with peaks and a few troughs. In an SAS post, to a greater or lesser extent, it can feel that service requirement comes before personal development. I did not always relish changes to my job plan, however, I think that this variety in practice did ultimately make me a more flexible and well-rounded practitioner. I now work 50% in Newcastle Dental Hospital and 50% in the OMFS unit at the RVI.

On a positive note, I was pleased in recent years to have been able to become involved in the Oral Surgery Training programme as both a Clinical and Educational Supervisor. Additional roles are extra work, but can bring new challenges and job satisfaction, and I would encourage SAS practitioners to look for opportunities to diversify your role as much as possible. This all has to be offset with one eye on work/life balance of course. With that in mind, I now work 4 days with no on call - this regular schedule has allowed me to spend more time with my two children, but did take away some of the variety of practice.

I feel that I have been very lucky in my career so far. Firstly, in accidentally stumbling across a specialty that I continue to enjoy, and secondly, in the timing of the Specialist List and AS regrading applications. An SAS post has suited me personally and I feel should still be regarded as a valued and rewarding career direction in Oral Surgery- although this can sometimes feel overshadowed by formal training. I appreciate that the career landscape is now somewhat different to my own experience but am very much engaged in trying to improve the development of other SAS practitioners through my position on BAOS Council.