

DIGITAL DENTISTRY AND ORTHODONTICS

Interview with Emma Laing



Specialist orthodontist Emma Laing from the Harley Street Dental Clinic speaks to Versha Miyanger and explains how incorporating digital dentistry into her practice has resulted in more satisfied patients

Growing up near Oxford and having her father working as a pilot meant Emma Laing had a wonderful childhood, spending every school holiday travelling the world. 'I loved experiencing new cultures and after deciding to study dentistry, I spent my undergraduate years at Bristol University. I then chose to move to London for vocational training, followed by



Maxillofacial Surgery and Orthodontics department of the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford and was totally inspired during this time,' she explains. 'I nearly went down the maxfac route after dental school but after senior house officer jobs I knew orthodontics was my preferred choice.'

Currently working at Harley Street Dental Clinic, in a beautiful Georgian townhouse on Harley Street filled with artwork, Emma is thriving in the multi-specialist practice. 'I've worked in several practices over the years and this made me appreciate the value of working as a team with all areas of dentistry in one place. Often new patient appointments are booked, for example, with a general dental check-up, a hygienist appointment and a consultation with me all on the same day. The patient feels that they are receiving an efficient service and as a clinician I know the patient is receiving the best care. So many adult patients have early periodontitis and to work on the same day as our periodontal specialist to see the patient jointly is really advantageous.'

INVISALIGN AND DIGITAL DENTISTRY
Emma has been an Invisalign provider for over 11 years. Being initially reticent about it

and having had such conventional training in which she used fixed braces, she decided her first patient would be herself. 'Having had some relapse since teenage orthodontic treatment, I was impressed by the ease of the treatment process, how comfortable the aligners were and the aesthetics. Interestingly I was seeing so many patients for consultation who never noticed that I was wearing aligners despite my gummy



two years maxillofacial surgery hospital jobs at UCLH, GOS and Guy's and King's. I then specialised in orthodontics at the Eastman. I had a fantastic but hard three years leading to a MSc with distinction and a MORth from the Royal College of Surgeons of England, allowing me to enter the specialist register for orthodontics,' she recalls.

Emma was initially interested in studying medicine but dentistry appealed more with the manual dexterity aspect and at the time more favourable working hours. 'I spent my teenage work experience in the Oral and



smile so this really made me think it was a very aesthetic and acceptable appliance to wear,' she explains. 'Also, using the iTero scanner improved my stance on Invisalign, via streamlining the treatment process and turnaround times and patient experience.'

And how has digital dentistry changed the way she has worked? 'In the last 10 years, digital dentistry is undoubtedly the most significant advancement to affect my practice. Yet many patients don't know this, nor how far things have come, how easy their treatment has become and how fast ►



and accurate. We live in a customer-led environment where we quite rightly want to see what we are getting for our time and expense. And to see it now, not wait several days or weeks. That's the beauty of what the iTero scanner does for us and our patients.'

She explains how she can now truly offer patients what they've been looking for with faster, accurate, easy treatment processes that don't interrupt their work or social or home lives. Previously, she couldn't offer treatment modalities with such ease. 'Even with Invisalign there were messy moulds and a slower turnaround time to get a Clincheck and then the aligners through. I ended up encouraging more conventional treatment because I knew it would lead to great results, hoping that this would sell it, despite the treatment process. But many just wouldn't go through this. So, without doubt I am now signing more patients up since the advent of the scanner and the advances in Invisalign aligner treatment.'

PATIENT COMMUNICATION

When asked about patient interaction, Emma is quick to emphasise that it is the most integral part of what she does and the essence of informed consent. 'Everyone we

see is permitting us to examine and treat them so of course we must explain things in their entirety. I find the use of visual aids such as the iTero scanner very beneficial. Like the saying goes that a picture tells a thousand words, I have found the power of photography, scanners and just letting the patient hold a mirror at each and every appointment ensures I engage with them effectively. When I had orthodontic treatment as a child I remember my headgear being fitted with minimal explanation and I haven't forgotten it to this day.'

As patients are more informed than ever with so much dental information online, Emma knows that it can be beneficial that patients come with more background knowledge about treatments they would consider. 'This does not however replace the skill of an experienced clinician so it can work both ways,' she says. 'Frequently their only concern is anterior alignment when I know there are more pressing occlusal issues.'

A PERFECT BALANCE

Emma has a love for learning but says with a young family, finding time can be difficult. 'Since becoming a mother I've been proud to be a working mum. With two young children and taking just a few weeks maternity leave for each, my life changed immeasurably but in a good way,' she adds. 'Having children has certainly made me more motivated and efficient. My drive started from my parents. My mum had three of us under age five to look after, which I now appreciate must have been exhausting. And my dad's work ethic whilst still making time for each of us was remarkable. He was always either flying a plane or doing work around the house. It

really hit home how hard they'd worked for us when I had my own family.'

Balancing work and family has certainly been a challenge for Emma but she explains how it has made both her and her husband to be supremely organised. 'My husband is really hands-on with our boys and has always supported me working, despite being so busy himself. There often don't seem to be enough hours in the day, but I've equally loved the chaos of a young family.'

'Seeing my children having fun and stimulated by the simplest of things makes you really appreciate these times. My youngest loves poking his fingers around peoples' teeth so perhaps he will be the next dentist in our family.'

The travel bug was instilled in me from an early age and nowadays I grab every opportunity to travel. I look forward to



travelling more with my kids too.'

And what are her future plans? 'I want to have a happy work-life balance and continue as a specialist, hopefully continually improving my standards and the experience patients receive and specifically getting more involved in digital dentistry. I've recently heard I'm a finalist for the upcoming Aesthetic Dentistry Awards in two categories which is wonderful - I feel really honoured' she answers. ●

HARLEY STREET DENTAL CLINIC

QUALIFICATIONS: BDS, MFDSRCS(Eng), MSc, MOrthRCS(Eng)

POSITION: Specialist in orthodontics, Harley Street Dental Clinic

DENTAL INTERESTS: Multi-disciplinary cases, labial and lingual fixed appliances, Invisalign, orthognathic surgery and digital dentistry innovations

INTERESTS OUTSIDE OF DENTISTRY: Spending time with my young children, keeping fit and travel.

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