

Shining a light

Oral Health talks to dental hygienist **Anna Middleton** about setting up her own business, trialling new products and communication

Passionate and dedicated, Anna Middleton is a rising star in the world of dental hygiene. Launching her business London Hygienist last year, she is clear about the essential ingredients required to deliver the very best in hygiene treatment: 'The success of my business has been built through emotional intelligence. To deliver a superior service and to ensure patients return time after time, I really need to tune into them. It's as much about what the patients don't say, as what they do.'

Trading places

Graduating from the Faculty of Royal College of Surgeons in 2015, Anna started out in dentistry as a dental nurse but moved to London to study dental hygiene at the Eastman Dental Hospital in 2013. On graduating, she knew she wanted to start her own branded hygiene business and settled on 'London Hygienist' as her trading name, cleverly combining two popular internet searches.

Now operating out of two practices in Chelsea and Battersea, Anna offers a highly personal, premium hygiene service and has built up a solid patient base.

With accolades including Best Team Member at the 2017 Dentistry Awards already to her name, she was also nominated for Dental Hygienist of the Year at the 2017 Oral Health Awards and 2018 Dental Awards as well as Best Patient Care at the 2017 Private Dentistry Awards.

Anna puts her success down to her ability to engage with people. 'I used to work in hospitality so recognise the importance of effective communication,' she says. 'Most of us listen so that we can formulate our reply, however, the key is to listen, so we can understand both what is being said but also what might lie behind the words too. To do this, emotional intelligence is key and by listening to the patient's past experiences. By picking up on bad experiences and fears you can tailor your approach accordingly, so you will be able to deliver a service to the patient that they are likely to return to time after time.'



You're worth it

For Anna, it is also about ensuring her patients feel amazing. She says: 'The price of a hygiene appointment can be similar to visiting a high-end hairdresser, so patients want to feel special and leave feeling good.'

'I work hard to deliver a personal service and often make a note or two about a patient, which can be a conversation starter at their next visit. No one wants to feel like they are on a conveyor belt and getting this right leads to repeat visits and word of mouth advertising. Patient retention is just as important as gaining new business.'

Alongside building her business, Anna is branching out in the industry, promoting oral health wherever possible. She believes there is a huge market for prevention since the change in legislation in 2013 allowing direct access to hygiene services; she uses her blogs and consumer articles to constantly campaign and raise its importance.

Anna's enthusiasm also extends to capitalising on her own profile. 'My aim is to shine a light on the crucial work of hygienists and encourage and inspire colleagues who perhaps don't feel they have a voice,' she says.


Variety club

Anna offers a variety of cleaning and whitening services to her patients and is always looking to educate and motivate her patients, without lecturing, 'I always say know your audience. No one wants

to feel like they are "being told off", but it is important to communicate the key messages in a way that imparts our knowledge but also empowers the patient to listen and put into practice our advice.'

Central to Anna's service is use of the very latest products to deliver the highest standards of treatment. As a Philips key opinion leader and oral health panel expert at comparethetreatment.com, Anna frequently tries out new products that can deliver a leading edge.

One of the most popular services Anna offers is her 'Diamond Clean' stain removal and she has been using the Mylunos prophylaxis unit since the beginning of the year to achieve superior results. 'My patients are looking for a gleaming, stain-free smile that feels extremely clean,' says Anna. 'This powder jet handpiece from Dürr Dental has been designed to deliver gentle, effective removal of supragingival discolouration.'

'Mylunos has quickly become an essential part of my toolkit and a valuable revenue stream for the practice. Patients love it and I'm finding they are asking for it at follow-up visits so it's providing the all-important reason to return!' 



Mylunos: 'a jet wash for teeth'

On using the Mylunos prophylaxis unit, Anna says: 'Where normal pastes are gritty and only clean what they come into contact with, the fine air and water flow of Mylunos combined with the trehalose powder is like a jet wash for teeth that gets into every tiny nook and crevice, lifting an invisible layer of stain that sometimes can't be seen. The non-abrasive powder completely dissolves in water so it is kind to the equipment too and doesn't block suction units.'

'I've been delighted with the results as it is providing a premium polish with better efficacy yet is very gentle on the gums, improves appearance and gives teeth a superior lustre. It is easy to clean and for hygienists who work at more than one practice it is completely mobile.'



Anna Middleton

Anna founded the London Hygienist to change the way oral healthcare is delivered to patients. 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.