

Creating prize-winning opportunities for Foundation Dentists

Victoria Sampson explains the value to her career of winning the 2019 British Endodontic Society Prize for Foundation Dentists.

Along with many newly-qualified dentists who have recently completed their Foundation Year, I have been contemplating where I want to take my future career. During my Foundation training with Shahab Mijafari, principal dentist at Excel Dental Care in West Hampstead, I had the opportunity to observe his often complex root canal treatments and he really ignited my passion for endodontics.

At dental school I had little exposure to endodontics, completing just one molar root canal – so when I graduated, I was very nervous, and didn't relish the prospect of endodontics. However, in my Foundation year I found myself looking for validation to show how I was progressing – and endodontics was one procedure which could be monitored to see whether or not I was doing well. I found myself warming to it and made the decision to improve my endo 'game'.

An unexpected career turn

During my Foundation Year I was given the opportunity to prepare an audit on endodontics. The audit, which has now evolved into a retrospective study, looks at Foundation Dentist training, which the government is considering reducing due to the cost. Health Education England spends £88.7m on Foundation training but little research appears to have been undertaken regarding its cost-effectiveness, nor the impact it has on newly qualified dentists. I wanted to provide evidence to show that it is absolutely a worthwhile investment and does drive improvement, especially in the field of endodontics.

Initially I had no desire to enter my paper into any competitions, but I received a lot of positive feedback from my colleagues. Realising this was a subject

not covered elsewhere, I applied to the British Endodontic Society (BES) Prize for Foundation Dentists and to my great pleasure and surprise, I won!

I accepted my prize and presented my research at the BES Conference in Manchester in November. It's been a very exciting opportunity for me and is definitely a boost to my career. I have always been interested in research and this shows I'm definitely on the right track. It was a great boost for Shahab as well who helped me with the research, creating the pilot study and the paper itself. We still keep in contact and he remains a great support.

Moving on

I now work in two practices – 38 Devonshire Street and Perfect Teeth in London – so I'm involved in both private and NHS dentistry. I'm in a general dentist role but I would definitely like to have more involvement in endodontics in the future.

The endo system I use is WaveOne® Gold from Dentsply Sirona. At first, I was using hand files for my initial root canal treatments and I found it unreliable and difficult to instrument. In contrast, WaveOne Gold gives me a lot of confidence, I know I am going to have a good outcome and I think for young dentists especially, that's exactly what is needed – a reliable, straightforward system.

WaveOne Gold is ideally suited for any general dentist looking to offer routine endodontics in practice. WaveOne Gold files are a premium product but with improved outcomes and shorter appointment times I think it is money well spent. WaveOne Gold allows a faster treatment so you can spend more time on other procedures such as obturation

and irrigation, and you can complete a routine case using only one or two files. It may initially cost a little more, but it saves a lot in the long run.

Take the opportunity

I would definitely recommend young dentists to enter the BES Award especially as it is one of only a handful of opportunities available to Foundation Dentists. There are lots of undergraduate prizes and prizes from societies for experienced dentists which is fantastic, but it would be good to have something more for Foundation Dentists. The Foundation year is a daunting time and, in my opinion, some more recognition for the hard work required in this year would be very helpful and gratefully received. For me, this Award provided an encouraging boost as well as the confidence to branch out into endodontics, which now forms part of my future career plans.

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Dr Victoria Sampson BDS General Dentist

Dr Sampson was delighted to win two British national dental prizes for published papers whilst obtaining her BDS at Bart's and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, qualifying in 2018. She was chosen to represent the UK in a special training programme at the renowned Karolinska Institute in Sweden, recently rated the top dental/medical school in the world.

