**Case Study: Dental Nurse - Sharon**

**What do you do?**

I work in a dental surgery, where I carry out my duties as a dental nurse. I prepare instruments for the dentist to use, assist with dental procedures, and help to run the surgery.

**What is your background?**

During school, I really enjoyed science subjects. I’ve worked in clerical positions, and also as a customer service representative.

I knew other people in dental nursing who liked the job, and when I looked in the paper, I noticed some job openings. I also liked the fact that I could move on to become a dental hygienist. Someone told me about a position, so I applied and then got the job.

I started work and did part-time study for the National Certificate in Dental Nursing.

**What characteristics do you need to be successful in your job?**

You have to have good personal skills to get on with patients and colleagues. You also have to be organised. The dentist is depending on you to have the instruments ready and the surgery set up.

Also, some dental procedures are time-consuming and technical, so you have to be hard-working.

**What other jobs could you do using the skills from this job?**

Dental nurses could move into other jobs in dentistry, such as becoming a hygienist. They could become sales reps for dental companies, perhaps. Also, there are other jobs where you have to be able to get on with people - customer- or client-focused jobs.

**What changes will there be in the future?**

I think the demand for dental nurses will remain the same. Almost the same number of dentists graduate each year, and they go on to open dental surgeries and employ dental nurses.

**What are the biggest challenges in your job?**

The most challenging part of my job is organising all the instruments and getting them sterilised and ready for clinical procedures.

**Are there many opportunities to enter this career?**

Positions are available. Volunteering to gain experience before getting a job can be a good idea.

**What do you like about your job?**

I like the interaction I have with my colleagues. I’m fortunate to work with people who are really nice and supportive of any ideas that I might have for making the surgery run better.

I like the responsibility for preparing instruments and making sure the surgery runs smoothly.

**What do you dislike about your job?**

Because dental nurses are either working in patients’ mouths or handling instruments that will be used in patients’ mouths, we’re constantly washing our hands and taking gloves on and off.
My hands often become dried and cracked, no matter how much moisturiser I use.

**What advice would you give to someone interested in your career?**

You need to be able to feel comfortable working in people's mouths, observing surgical procedures and dealing with patients who are nervous or in pain. But, don't worry too much if these things bother you at first. If you stick with it, you'll get used to them over time!

**A day in the life**

9:00 am - 12:00 pm

- setting up and preparing the dental clinic
- seating patients and making them comfortable
- putting bibs on patients
- taking X-rays
- working on fillings, tooth extractions, crown/bridge work, etc
- processing X-rays
- passing needles and instruments to dentist
- escorting the patients out at the end of their check-up or treatment
- rinsing and cleaning up to be ready for next patient
- wrapping instruments for sterilisation.

12:00 pm - 1:00 pm

Having lunch.

1:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Continuing with similar tasks as the morning session. Also spend some time working on patients' notes.