



# EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR CRANIO-MAXILLO-FACIAL-SURGERY

## NEWSLETTER – SUMMER 2019

### **QUEST FOR THE SECOND DEGREE – MY EXPERIENCE!** **SHOBHIT SAXENA**



“Wow, you guys have my respect.” “I could never go to university again!” “Are you crazy?” Working in oral & maxillofacial surgery (OMFS), my fellow junior trainees and I will have grown accustomed to hearing such declarations from our medical colleagues.

Such is our species: an anomaly in the landscape of medical career ambitions, a curious band of self-selecting, autonomous individuals for whom the worn-out cliché “it’s not the destination, it’s the journey” could not ring any truer.

And what a journey it is indeed. My own started in my final year of medical school in 2014, whilst sitting in an OMFS clinic and contemplating one of life’s more mystifying, barely comprehensible structures: the human tooth. I was aware that to enter OMFS specialist training in the United Kingdom, both a medical and dental degree would be required. At first, I desperately tried exploring the simpler alternatives, the paths already well-trodden and ones that would save me a second, (costly) trip into higher education: otolaryngology and plastic surgery. But alas, even the combined allure of tonsils, grommets, hands and burns could not win me over; no other speciality offered me what OMFS could, I knew.

I was now careful to select one of the few post-graduate Foundation Programmes (otherwise known as: “Baptism by Fire for Junior Doctors”) that would offer me my first, much anticipated experience of working in OMFS. As it happened, my four-month post at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford only further cemented my love of the specialty, and I was now left with the dilemma: shall I go straight into my second degree, or wait until I have completed two years of basic surgical training first? I opted for the former, preferring to go through two years of intensive surgical training and hoping that this momentum would confidently launch me into OMFS speciality training, seamlessly and with no interruptions in between.

I am now in the penultimate year of my graduate-entry dental degree at King’s College London, all the while working as a part-time clinical fellow in OMFS at a Northwest London Hospital. Balancing dental caries, periodontology, exodontia, crowns, bridges and dentures with marriage and the MRCS has been a complicated and yet completely refreshing experience. Also, whilst I am secretly relishing being regarded as the “old, wise man” amongst my undergraduate colleagues and gaining invaluable experience in OMFS through my part-time work, I now realise that the “journey” we take in OMFS is *anything but* cliché. It’s certainly not over yet and I am planning on enjoying every minute of it.