



Profile

Position

Principal dentist and owner of three private general dental practices

Qualifications

BSc(Hons) Microbiology (Dundee)
BDS with clinical distinction
(Birmingham) MJDF RCS

Dental interests

Orthodontics

Interests out of dentistry

Spending time with my son,
reading, trying to get more active

Owner of three successful dental practices and scientific director of ESAO, self-confessed perfectionist **Raha Sepehrara** talks about her love of aesthetic orthodontics and understanding your limits

Raha
Sepehrara





ARE YOU A GDP PROVIDING STO?

Become a member of the ESAO and practice STO in a safe and ethical way



Member's Benefits

- ✓ Use of the logo on the practice stationery/website
- ✓ Listing on the dentist locator
- ✓ Access to the ESAO informed consent pack
- ✓ Monthly newsletter
- ✓ Discount on courses
- ✓ Discounts from the ESAO partners
- ✓ Access to online training

How to join

Visit esao.co.uk/join

ONLY £225

www.esao.co.uk



'I FEEL GDPs NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE LIMITATIONS OF THE ORTHODONTIC TREATMENTS THEY PROVIDE OR THE LIMITATIONS IN THEIR OWN ABILITIES'



Italian-born dentist Raha Sepehrara is the scientific director of The European Society of Aesthetic Orthodontics (ESAO) which is a non-profit organisation launched only last year. It supports dentists and provides training on the latest developments in aesthetic orthodontics. It also educates the general public about aesthetically focused orthodontic treatments, which is a subject close to Raha's heart.

'I come from Rome and I came to the UK 15 years ago to study at Dundee University,' Raha explains. 'My dream was to do medicine and therefore I studied a science degree in preparation for entry into medicine. But, within my first year of university I met my now husband Kalpesh Bohara, who was studying dentistry, and I developed a huge interest in this subject and decided that that was the profession that interested me. After graduating in microbiology, I went to the University of Birmingham to study dentistry.'

AESTHETIC ORTHODONTICS

After her VT, Raha attended many courses all over the UK and the world to further her knowledge in orthodontics. 'I have been able to meet many influential speakers and to learn about a vast variety of orthodontic techniques and systems. Because of my background, I was appointed scientific director of the ESAO and have been in charge of organising courses. We had our first inaugural course in December 2013 in London, which was a success. We also had an extremely successful course aimed at GDPs and DCPs last month



in Birmingham. With this role, I have also been heavily involved in designing thorough consent forms, treatment assessment forms and putting together a list of recommended reading for our members,' she adds.

When asked about the controversy about 'instant ortho', Raha answers 'I truly believe GDPs and orthodontists can work together, just like other specialists accept GDPs carrying out certain treatments (like endodontics) in general practice. I don't see why this can't be the case with orthodontics.'

But Raha accepts the boundaries and stresses the limits of what they can achieve. 'I feel GDPs need to understand the limitations of the orthodontic treatments they provide or the limitations in their own abilities and understand when is best to refer. When I speak to my older colleagues, I hear that a lot of GDPs use to carry out orthodontics in their general practices, with the support of their local orthodontic consultant. It would be great to build this sort of relationship with our orthodontic colleagues again. I have been very lucky to meet some really helpful and approachable specialists such as Ian Hutchinson, Asif Chatoo, Ross Hobson and Peter Huntley.'

IN PRACTICE

Raha spreads her time working between her three award-winning practices in Leicester, Loughborough and Nottingham and sees patients from all over the country. 'Before and after qualifying, I always had a wish to have my own practice. My husband had his own single-handed private practice, but I really wanted to have my own business, which I was in charge of,' she says. 'Six months out of VT, I finally had the opportunity to buy my own practice. With time, I got more involved in the management of the two practices as well as working at both places. Both practices grew over time, our teams expanded and our range of treatments got more and more varied.'

'I had to learn a lot about employment law, people management, patient management and learn a lot about myself as well to be a good team leader and a good clinician.' Last year, Raha felt like she needed another challenge and thought that she would hugely benefit from having another practice which ran differently from her single-handed practices. 'I wanted to have a multiple surgery practice so that we could have associates with different skills working with us. My husband wasn't so keen on this idea, as he felt it would have been too much with our young son and two busy practices. I was adamant, so we went for it. It has now been nine months and the new practice is starting to stabilise and grow,' says Raha.

'The practices we took over were already established, so we didn't have much choice over location. Each one of them is designed differently, as we had to adapt to the way the buildings were, my husband's practice has a more homely feel, my practice has more of a city feel while the newer multi-surgery practice has a more contemporary touch. Our staff has been fantastic and has grown with us.' Raha specifies that her staff selection doesn't depend on skills or qualifications. 'Personality is a very important factor,' she says. 'Once the right person joins our team, they get all the training necessary to be excellent at their job. Character, enthusiasm, empathy are all things we look for when hiring people. I am proud of how our practices have grown and the reputation we have built, and we wouldn't have done it without our amazing team,' she adds.

NEED FOR PERFECTION

Raha's passion for her work is evident. 'I love to change and improve someone's smile,' she enthuses. 'Seeing the patients' reactions are priceless. There have been so many tears of joy at our practices, which have set everyone off! Seeing



patients so appreciative of your work is invaluable. I also like to build good relationships with my patients, seeing them go through different stages of their lives, weddings, babies etc.'

Where does Raha get her motivation and drive from? 'I have always been someone who wants to do well and I am a self-confessed perfectionist, which is why sometimes I get stressed when things are not impeccable. I am aware this is a common issue amongst dentists. I have had some difficult times, especially when I had to leave my newborn to go to work, so it has been hard to keep motivated. In the last year, I have been reading a lot to keep focused and there have been some really good books that have kept me motivated. Some of those books have been: Lean in, The Chimp Paradox, and books by Ashley Latter and the Dale Carnegie training group.'

Raha believes it is essential as a team leader to be positive and strong to keep your staff positive and motivated. 'I think we must lead by example, she says. 'We have won three awards for our region and these achievements have been a great motivational tool for us all the practice.'

She says she has been lucky enough to learn from very influential and inspiring people, who have guided her on the right path. 'My husband Kalpesh has been a great role model, as he has incredible drive, ambition, thirst for knowledge and he is an excellent dentist. Rick DePaul has been the person who ignited my interest in orthodontics and he still continues to have a huge influence in my career. I also really admire Tif Qureshi. He is a very inspirational speaker, extremely knowledgeable and very skilled. Additionally, I look up to Ian Hutchinson, a specialist orthodontist who also carries out general dentistry. Finally, I have also great admiration for a Spanish orthodontist, who has been a great mentor to me, Dr Ramon Perera.'

WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND FUTURE PLANS

'Balancing work and family life has been hard and I am not sure whether I've got it right yet!' she admits. 'I am still working on it. At the moment my spare time is spent with my son and I would not want it any other way. I am also trying to get more active and getting back into tennis and the gym. I have been really motivated by some of my dental colleagues who manage to juggle work family and exercise in their busy lives.'

So any regrets? 'I guess you learn from your mistakes and should not really regret anything in life. I think I am getting better with dealing with the stresses of my job, but there are times when I don't cope as well as I would like and in hindsight I wish I hadn't let certain things get to me.'

Raha thinks the profession has changed a lot over the last 10 years in many good ways, with the improvement of materials and equipment. 'On the other side, I do feel it has become a very litigious profession, which adds more stress to our jobs,' she says. 'I am not sure where the profession is going forward, but I have seen a lot of beautiful dentistry being produced, which I think keeps us all very inspired and striving to get better at our jobs. I hope I can reach a good balance, so that I can continue to enjoy both and can expand my family,' she adds. ■

Contact

Raha Sepehrara



To ask a question or
comment on this article
please send an email
to: PPD@fmc.co.uk

