

# A bright young thing

Dental Practice meets Dr Ogoamaka Eze and finds out just how important having the right attitude, and the right parent, can be

NOT at all a run-of-the-mill dentist (if there is such a thing), if Ogoamaka Eze looks at all familiar then perhaps you saw her on the BBC Morning TV programme in October or read her piece in August about the decline of the NHS in the *Guardian*.

She was invited to be one of the panellists at the Westminster Health Forum last November, and she made good use of her time there. Ogo's current practice in Paddington has been denied PCT funding, so she

has been unable to accept any NHS patients even though she would be perfectly willing to work within the new contract (although she remains on the fringes of the system by performing NHS locum work).

She raised a point with Barry Cockcroft, the chief dental officer, that at a time when dentists are leaving the NHS every week a practice willing to work within the system could be just turned away without funding; and when she asked him what she should do about patients coming to her

practice desperate for NHS care, she got the answer: "Just refer them to the nearest NHS practice."

"That was a ludicrous answer," Ogo says. "What kind of system has health professionals turning away people in need? What was wrong with the old way?"

For the last two years, Ogo has been building

up the goodwill and client base of her private practice, which combines a full range of general and cosmetic dental care. A lot of her work has resulted from word-of-mouth referrals, and she is in an ideal central London demographic with a good mixture of business and residential trade in the area. Both of the local Hilton hotels have contracted to send patients to her.

In her practice Ogo will have nothing to do with stereotypical attitudes towards dentistry; she feels that people should actually look forward to a visit with their dentist and so she has set out to create the right kind of calm, soothing environment required to make that a practical possibility. She had always planned a practice like this but it took a long time to find the right place; she was looking for the right kind of "karma" (her words), and real potential for development.

"I wanted the space to create a one-stop health centre," Ogo says, "so there is a GP unit here and a second surgery let out to another dentist. We have access to other facilities such as a masseuse on call, and I am looking at the practicalities of offering a Botox injection service."

## Environment of trust

The calming experience begins at reception with Monica, whose warm and welcoming smile draws people into a light and airy environment in which it is easy to build a sense of friendliness and trust. "Trust is essential in order to encourage relaxation," Ogo tells us. "We need to start by getting the medical history in order to ensure that there is nothing there to preclude treatment; then we need to talk to find out what the patient actually wants."

"Sometimes the dentist will see something that will seem to be a priority over and above what has been requested and the patient must be made to understand why. Ignorance has no value; we have to be able to explain the situation in a gentle but clear manner that the patient can



Ogoamaka Eze

respond to. That is one of the saddest things about the target culture of NHS dentistry under the new contract, it takes away time and tries to strip all humanity from the process, making it just a bureaucratic transaction, and that is just a shame."

Ogo outlined the benefits of one of her areas of expertise; she excels in tooth whitening, crown and bridgework, veneers and implants, plus she has added membership of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentists to her CV. She knows how to create a smile.

"There has been a noticeable increase in the popularity of the 'make-over' and self-improvement sort of TV programme, which has helped people to realise that caring about one's appearance is about more than vanity – it's about confidence," she says.

"Perfecting a smile can change the way a person uses their mouth; it can make an improvement to the way



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people interact with others because they are not trying to hide their teeth. It can be like the sun coming out; it can be life changing. People want to look better, younger, and it's available to them, it's right down their street."

She feels much less positive about another growing cosmetic trend which is happening outside the professional surgery: "I attended one of the Baby Shows, at Earls Court, with a friend of mine who was pregnant. As we wandered round I noticed that there was a stand selling tooth-whitening gel for home use.

"Of course curiosity got the better of me so I went on the stand. I was given no real instruction. The woman that was seeing to me just gave me a piece of plastic to put between my teeth and told me to rub the gel over my teeth as carefully as possible. When I asked her what level of care I should take, she said it was all right and that I would be fine.

"It was really frightening; it was some kind of really strong whitening bleach that turned my lips and gums white and was very painful and

uncomfortable. They had no water on the stand, so at least it was for the best that I had a bottle with me so I could flush my mouth with copious amounts and rinse the stuff out.

"The stand staff just looked at me blankly – they had no idea what to do and didn't seem to be bothered, and it was obvious that they

had just been paid for the show. It was lucky that as a dentist I had applied the gel with care; it could have been worse – and what if I had been a heavily pregnant expectant mother and hadn't had the water with me? It doesn't bear thinking about. This stuff is available over the counter for people to use without a mouth guard, in fact with no protection at all – surely someone should be looking into that?"

### Hard working

Ogo grew up as one of four children in a hard-working environment. Her mum, Miriam, brought up the children on her own yet still found the time and energy to put herself through law school, become a councillor for Lewisham, and build up a business as a property developer. Miriam was a great example to her children, that if you want something hard enough and you are prepared to work for it, you can achieve it. All four kids went on to further education, all on scholarships.

Ogo's career choice resulted from a dilemma of talent: she loved art and took it to AS level but she also loved

science, especially biology and chemistry, and it was the fusing of the disciplines into one direction that led her to eventually leaving King's College in 2001 with her Bachelor of Dental Surgery degree.

Since then she has gained membership with the Faculty of General Dental Practice (MFGDP) through the Royal College of Surgeons and received a certificate in Surgical and Prosthetic Implantology from the Eastman Dental Institute.

Ogo even finds the CPD courses she attends enjoyable and useful, realising that as a result of attending the course she might only be picking up one useful item of information, but that item may prove essential.

### Giving something back

On the cusp of her third decade, Ogo is already looking for ways to give something back: she has started working with young people as part of the Urban Synergy Mentoring Group because she feels that "there are a lot of people who have no concept of the heights they can reach if they move forward with passion. If I can help just one young person to break out of the mould of apathy and failure, it will be



Ogo's website – [www.dentistatm2.co.uk](http://www.dentistatm2.co.uk) – is a great example of online marketing

worth it". She would also like to go back to King's College, but this time as a tutor: "I would love to put some reality into the courses. I can remember taking between two to three hours over one amalgam filling, and it wasn't unusual for someone to take up to 10 hours on a single root canal procedure – time scales so impractical in the real world.

"And when it comes to learning the business side of dentistry – wow, that comes as a shock when you meet it for the first time."

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## BACD bestows top honour

THE British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry has recognised "the level of excellence in cosmetic dentistry" of Dr Tim Bradstock-Smith, who now becomes only its fourth "accredited" member. Named by the *Financial Times* as "the most fashionable cosmetic

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