

Shedding light on... Dr Andy Wallace

Dr Andy Wallace has a particular interest in restorative and cosmetic dentistry, and lectures regularly on cosmetic dentistry, including cosmetic tooth alignment and tooth whitening. He shares his whitening experiences in a chat which sheds light on the integral elements of his clinical practice.

What were your expectations at the start of your career?

My undergraduate focused on the mechanical aspects of dentistry, and I didn't value the importance of 'softer skills' like managing people, alongside learning how to do endo and tooth preparation. Quite quickly in my early career in a high-needs area of Belfast, I realised this type of dentistry in the NHS was not personally rewarding and I felt that it wasn't for me. I stayed in that practice for six years until I had a conversation with the practice owner and he opened my eyes to the fact that education was the way to move my career on, and I've been learning ever since.

What challenges have you faced?

In the early days, I felt that dentistry in a high needs area was like painting the Sydney Harbour Bridge – you finish treating the caries in your patient, and then you start over again. Work-life balance is always a challenge; I can find it hard to balance teaching commitments, further education and home life. I have a very understanding wife who picks up the slack when I have to travel for work.

What would you like to pass on to the next generation of dental professionals?

My vocational teacher, Pearse Stinson, instilled in me a want to always do the best dentistry you can, and he was the one that pointed me towards seeking further training and education when I was becoming ever more disillusioned with dentistry. This philosophy of aspiring to do the best dentistry, wherever you are working, has always stood me well. Getting involved with the right group of colleagues is so very important. The IAS Academy and Dental Tubules have a sense of community and positivity that is not common enough in our profession.

What would you do differently if you could start again?

I would probably be more selective about the courses I chose. I tended to go on any course that took my fancy, and ended

up spending more money and time away from practice and family than I needed to. But I did meet some fantastic colleagues through some of these, who have become great friends.

What are your proudest achievements?

Finishing My MClinDent from Kings was probably the toughest thing I've done. It was a massive amount of work and family life had to go on hold for four years. The thing I am most proud of is teaching with the IAS Academy. Tif Qureshi and James Russell asked me to get involved and I had never done any form of public speaking; it really made me so nervous. But I now teach regularly and have done it in huge rooms of people. I love spreading the philosophy of minimally invasive cosmetic dentistry that Tif has pioneered.

What products do you recommend?

Every dentist should wear loupes. I've recently switched to refractive loupes and have found that, along with pilates, my back pain is pretty much gone. Since the product was launched I've been using Venus Diamond and Venus Pearl composite, and find it gives me great results that have an impressive longevity. Philips Zoom DayWhite is such an important part of the Align Bleach Bond (ABB) technique that Tif pioneered. If you can't get the patient a comfortable, predictable way to achieve a great improvement in tooth colour, then you can't get ABB to be a viable alternative to more invasive restorative cosmetic dentistry.

How does teeth whitening fit into a wider restorative case?

Most larger restorative cases involve whitening, as most patients like some improvement in the colour of their teeth. Teeth that have been whitened are often easier to colour match either with composite or porcelain. I recommend adding whitening discussions to treatment planning at an early stage to ensure your beautifully made crowns or veneers match your patient's teeth.

What is your recommended treatment protocol for teeth whitening?

The key to the best result is patient compliance, so you need to find a product that suits your patients' lifestyle and is comfortable to use as it minimises sensitivity. A lot of my

whitening cases are part of the ABB protocol, so I recommend Philips Zoom 6% hydrogen peroxide because it can be used for 60 minutes per day, and can fit in with patients wearing their aligners at the final stages of alignment. Most patients prefer to only have whitening trays in for a limited time, so 6% DayWhite suits most patients. Carbamide peroxide products like Zoom NiteWhite are slower acting, so need to stay in longer and are ideal for patient that are comfortable wearing trays for longer periods or overnight.

How can you manage patient expectations?

The key to managing patient expectations is having a conversation about their starting position, and photos are ideal for this. You can make the patient aware of restorations that will not change colour, exposed dentine and root surfaces; these will only improve to a certain degree and may be sensitive. Document the starting colour and show the patient an expected colour change so they can understand realistic goals. For stubbornly coloured teeth, accurately fitting trays and a product that manages sensitivity so the patient can whiten for more time than the typical 2-3 weeks is critical.

How do you combat sensitivity?

If the patient is sensitive their compliance will drop off quickly. Management of sensitivity starts before we take the scans for the whitening trays. I get the patients to start on a whitening toothpaste two weeks before whitening starts. Most desensitising toothpastes will help, but opting for one that contains a bioactive glass, like Sensodyne Repair and Protect, is ideal. Philips Zoom products contain three elements to fight sensitivity, fluoride, potassium nitrate and uniquely amorphous calcium phosphate (ACP) which binds to the tooth surface and occludes the tubules, fighting sensitivity and prolonging the whitening result.

What lifestyle advice should dentists share for patients undergoing teeth whitening?

Thankfully, we can get a great improvement in colour without a significant imposition in lifestyle change. Simply avoid anything highly coloured for the first 30-60 minutes after whitening for minimal impact. Short acting gel means the patient doesn't need to skip their morning tea or coffee. Regular top-ups will be needed depending on diet, and hygiene, but this is flexible for the patient and means a continued income for the practice.



How do you recommend introducing tooth whitening into your practice?

The simplest way to introduce tooth whitening is to take photos or scans of your patients' teeth and put them up on the screen. Many patients will comment first on the colour, and that opens the conversations so that the dental team can offer solutions.

How can you empower other team members to perform whitening treatments?

Team members can be trained to take photos or scans, to discuss whitening options such as night time, day time, chairside, they can take impressions with a little training and mentoring as well. Your team can even fabricate basic trays with a simple vacuum former and material.

Why do you enjoy tooth whitening treatments?

It is such a simple non-invasive treatment that can make a significant improvement in a patient's smile and self confidence in a short space of time.

Do you consider tooth whitening as a gateway treatment to more complex restorative treatments?

Whitening can open a patient's mind to the idea of improving their smile and opens a pathway of conversation. It can start with whitening, then replacing a few discoloured fillings, and end up with alignment and edge bonding.

Why do you use Philips' Zoom whitening system?

I have used Philips products for such a long time and find them so predictable in terms of outcome and patient comfort. I have occasionally tried other products but have always returned to Philips when the patients complain about sensitivity. ■

Creating Psynergy

Over the last few years, managers have become aware that to create a happy, productive team and manage people effectively, we also need to consider their mental wellbeing.

Being honest, there have been occasions a feeling of dread has arisen when, as a manager, I'm faced with a delicate situation around a mental health scenario that needs handling with care and empathy. It's a huge responsibility on a personal and professional level, that we really don't want to get wrong.

I've been on many Mental Health Awareness courses but have always found it hard to bring an actual strategy

into the workplace. Then I met Rick!

I was blown away by his approach to creating a mentally well team that encompassed and supported everyone in the organisation, including me! Without blowing my own trumpet and that of my fellow practice managers, we are the heroes that so often look after everyone else while neglecting our own mental health.

Since our initial meeting, I have implemented Psynergy Mental Wellbeing into my practice, as have many of my clients in practices. Now, we are so chuffed to extend this to ADAM members with a rather wonderful member offer.



Ritesh 'Rick' Aggarwal

Rick was keen to understand how a PM's mind works, and to sum it up, I said, "We can't and won't have unlimited time to implement a new system, we won't have disposable time to onboard our teams. It must be easy, effective and provide a great outcome that is noticeable and actionable."

Part of me felt I was probably asking too much... but I am always happy to be proved wrong (even heroes get it wrong sometimes).

Launching Psynergy within your team will wow you, as well as your teams. You will be amazed at what you can achieve and the improvements to you and your team's mental wellness. ■

About the author
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