

Multi-award winning private dentist Shameek Popat talks to Versha Miyanger about what drives him to reach those heady heights and what it was that got the ball rolling

Like so many young Asians in the 1980s Shameek was always expected to follow a professional path and study to have a 'typical career' such as a doctor, dentist or accountant. 'When I take time to consider my parents' expectations,' he recalled, 'I realise that it was a direct consequence of their own personal experiences. Our parents had to work hard to start over and make a new life in another country. I guess my career in dentistry was as a consequence of living in Manchester with my uncle who is a qualified, practising dentist who enjoyed what he did in Stockport. My brother and I lived with him during our then 'O' levels and 'A' levels and as impressionable young boys, followed his profession.' Indeed this was a blessing in disguise, since Shameek had fallen in love with the art of dentistry. 'It suits my skillset and my desire for precision and perfection in everything I do.'

ROSEBANK DENTAL

After graduating from Guys, he worked in a couple of practices and qualified for his MFGDP in 1998, before buying Rosebank Dental Practice in 2002. Rosebank is a well-respected and state-of-the-art private practice in Chorleywood, Hertfordshire. 'When I bought the practice it was a run-down, part-time local practice with one dentist. When I saw it, I loved it immediately. I realised the possible potential. I knew that I wanted to build a dental practice that looked beautiful and provide the best quality world class dentistry to this wonderful suburb of London.'

Today that vision is a reality. Rosebank is a fully private operation practicing comprehensive dentistry that involves all fields of dentistry. 'In recent years, the practice has been totally refurbished and looks beautiful' he explained. 'It is a pleasure to come to work in a nice environment with a really lovely hardworking and professional team that I am really proud of. Building a successful, loyal and talented team is one of the hardest parts of the job. Over the last 11 years I have worked hard to establish the practice and carve a niche for



Shameek and the Rosebank Dental team

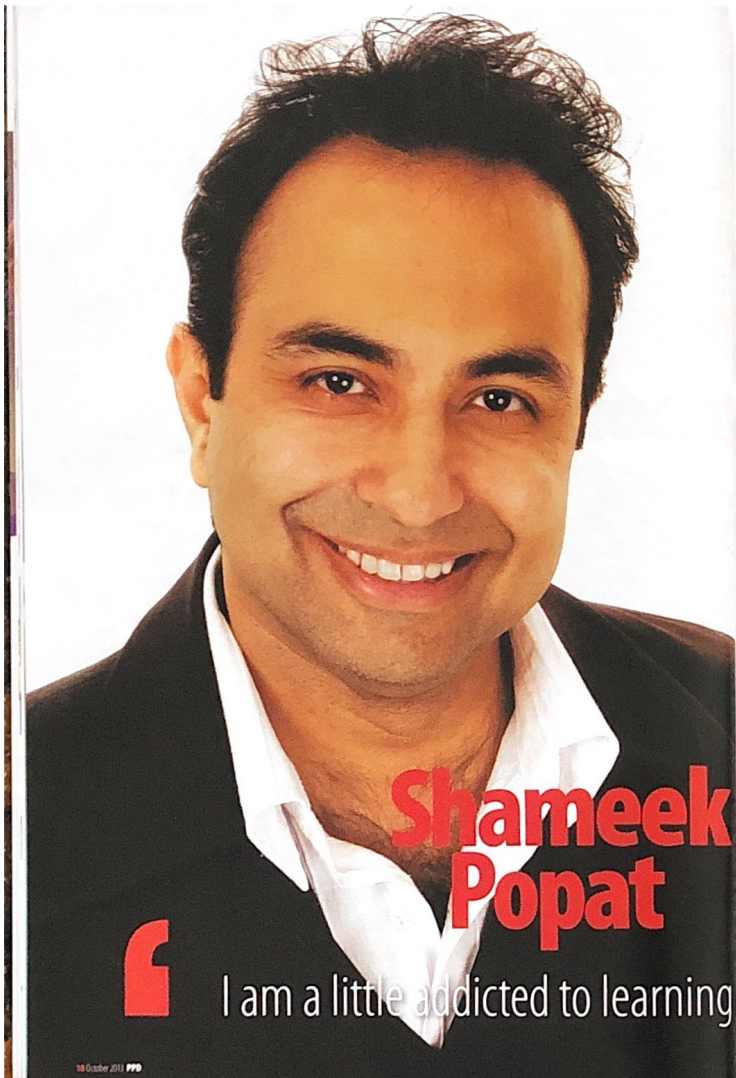
myself. I started developing my skills through further education and attended many courses to further my skill base. I believe in the old adage that 'knowledge is power'. The more we know about our field, the greater the difference we can make in our patients' life. Along the way I have met various inspirational people who I have aspired to and also many of my contemporary peers, who have all played a part in shaping my dentistry that I practice today. Mentors like John Kois, Ken Harris, Frank Spear, Didier Dietschi, John Cranham, Ian Buckle, Pascal Magne to name a few. These are just some of my esteemed colleagues that I have had the pleasure to learn from and work alongside. These guys are what I call shortcuts. They make my learning journey effective and efficient,' he adds.

PUSHING THE LIMITS

Shameek is a strong believer in the idea that he is able to offer all his patients full comprehensive dentistry. 'I have to confess, that I am a little addicted to learning and constantly improving myself' he admits. 'I guess I live by the rule - the more technique I have, the less I have to worry about. I not only use all the brain I have, but all that I can borrow as dentistry does not stand still. To continue to be at the front of the pack, means you have to commit yourself to improving, else you get left behind.'

Having participated in so many learning journeys, Shameek decided that he had to have a clear focus and choose effectively what path to follow. Inspired by John Kois, who put a fire in his belly, Shameek realised that he could not practice effective cosmetic dentistry without functional-based theory. He therefore set upon a five-year goal at The Kois Centre in Seattle. 'I take great pleasure in presenting a treatment plan to a patient with many layers of requirements and weaving the treatment with specialist knowledge,' he said. 'Comprehensive dentistry that involves interdisciplinary planning with my orthodontist, periodontist and oral surgeon and coming up with a foolproof treatment plan that can change a person's life. It's great fun brainstorming a practical treatment plan in accordance with the patient's wishes. The key to successful and predictable dentistry starts with the comprehensive exam, thoughtful planning, and a commitment to give your best.'

I love the tale of the woodcutters. Woodcutter A cuts wood all day. Woodcutter B keeps stopping and sitting down. At the end of the day, Woodcutter B has three times more wood than Woodcutter A. Woodcutter A asks 'how could this happen? You were resting all day?' Woodcutter B says 'I wasn't resting. I was sharpening my saw.' Take time



Shameek Popat



I am a little addicted to learning and constantly improving myself



PPD DENTIST TALK PROFILE

to sharpen your skills, your tools, and your resources, and you will be more productive. I get my motivation from going to courses, hearing my peers speak and learning from them. This is what put's the fire in my belly because like any job the embers need to be fed for that fire to glow brightly.

I am a self-confessed learning junkie. When I am not studying or attending courses, I am reading in my spare time. I love reading. I think what I do, is take the best of everything that I learn and read and help it to develop myself.

MULTI-AWARD WINNING

Shameek's commitment to his profession has awarded him many prizes. He has won an impressive number of national awards, among them, 'Best Practice in the South East' (Dentistry Awards 2009) and 'Private Dentist of the Year' (Private Dentistry Awards 2010). 'My determination not to compromise patient care drives me to further my goals. In life we either have results or reasons why we don't have results.' Shameek now sits on the boards of judges and is a mentor to students from all around the world.

'I am very proud and humbled to have received many awards - it helps me to reinforce my commitment to dentistry and it feels good to have the acknowledgement from your peers and mentors that your work is of the highest standards. My proudest academic achievement though, has to be graduating from The Kois Centre in Seattle, as only the third UK graduate to receive this honour and thereafter qualifying as only the second UK dentist to be a Kois

mentor. John Kois, my mentor and my friend, has taught me many things. Professionally, I am a better dentist because of him. I have spent the last six years of this learning journey, pushing the boundaries of development - make no mistake, the boundaries keep moving and changing - and so we as professionals must continue to move and change with it. Though have to admit now, that I get more satisfaction and pride if my children achieve something rather than anything I achieve! Nothing feels you with as much pride as their success, nothing makes you suffer like their defeats. I feel more alive watching them do their best.'

RELAXATION

'It is so difficult getting the work/life balance right', he said. 'Professionally, when the opportunities come you have to grasp them, whilst you are young enough and keen enough to make good use of them. You do not want to regret not taking them when you had the chance. To get anywhere in life you have to work hard and to get better, you have to work harder than the next person - let no one fool you that it is an easy journey. On the other hand life seems to be speeding past. Every possible spare moment I have, I spend with my family. Having experienced the loss of my mother recently, I have re-evaluated my priorities. There are always challenges in life, but without them we would not sit down and create solutions. Life is all about learning from every experience and our kids grow up so quickly. My children are my relaxation. They are all keen sportspeople - so we spend many weekends at tennis tournaments and on the sidelines of the football pitch cheering them on. My only bone of contention is that - as a passionate Liverpool FC fan - I am being tested constantly for my loyalty to my club, as my little boy who plays for the Watford junior academy, is an equally passionate Watford FC fan!'

REFLECTION

With so many achievements over the years it is surprising that Shameek has any regrets. 'I remember graduating and thinking that the world was my oyster. But upon reflection, I realise now that my arrogance of graduating kept me happy to stay within my box. I wish I had started my journey earlier. I spent the first few years after graduating enjoying



the spoils of working without pushing ahead to new territory. I wish I had heard and met John Kois earlier.'

So what does Shameek make of the future of dentistry? 'The profession seems to go in cycles with occlusion being in vogue in the sixties, then periodontics in the seventies, bonding in the eighties, then veneers and whitening in the nineties and noughties. Then it was occlusion again and now bonding and orthodontics are in vogue. Digital scanners and CAD/CAM technology are probably the future. Computer technology is unstoppable with computer power doubling every two years, so it's going to take over how we work but I am enjoying learning about snoring and sleep apnoea, though it's not as sexy!' Personally, I wish to raise as much money as I can for leukaemia and lymphoma research. My mother fought a brave battle against leukaemia for two years and lost that fight a few months back. She was treated and looked after really well by our hospitals here in London and I would like to help them by raising as much money as I can to help them fight this terrible disease.'

LOOKING UP TO THE EXPERTS

Are there any dental professionals Shameek admires? 'Francoise Rene Auguste Chateaubriand said, "A master in the Art of Living draws no sharp distinction between his work and his play; his labour and his leisure; his mind and his body; his education and his recreation. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence through whatever he is doing, and leaves others to determine whether he is working or playing. To himself, he always appears to be doing both," says Shameek. 'John Kois and Ken Harris embody this and anyone else who works with this philosophy gets my respect.'

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

SHAMEEK POPAT

Position: Principal dentist at Rosebank Dental Practice, Mentor at Kois Center, Mentor for CCADS

Qualifications: BDS(Lond), MFGDP(UK)

Family: Wife and three children

Lives: Chorleywood, Hertfordshire

Dental interests: Comprehensive dentistry, which involves a true bridging of all the dental disciplines - oral surgery, orthodontics, endodontics, restorative/cosmetic and periodontics

Interests outside of dentistry: Reading, travelling, football, cricket and skiing.



Q&A WITH THE AWARD WINNING DENTIST
DR SHAMEEK POPAT

WHAT A WONDERFUL SUMMER IT HAS BEEN AND GREAT START BY WATFORD LAST SATURDAY IN THE CHAMPIONSHIP. LOOKING FORWARD TO THE PREMIERSHIP STARTING THIS WEEK, SHOULD BE AN EXCITING SEASON AHEAD! ANYWAY NOW TO SOME Q&A'S

Q. WHY DO I NEED REGULAR CHECK-UPS WHEN THERE ARE NO PROBLEMS WITH MY TEETH?

A. When we check your teeth at the practice, we see things you won't see in the mirror no matter how closely you look. Just by saying open wide we can detect a number of problems that aren't visible to the untrained eye. And the technology available to us gives us an additional advantage!

Your teeth can alert us to...

- Possible deterioration in fillings, crowns, and other restorations.
- We may spot the beginnings of root cavities or decay on the roots of your teeth which have been laid bare by receding gums.
- A close inspection can reveal troublesome periodontal pockets caused by gum disease, and sometimes it takes a radiograph and a little dental detective work, but we may even find indications of...
- New decay tucked under the gum line or hidden under existing fillings – two places

you just can't see!

- You may not know it, but your teeth may have hairline fractures.
- You may not feel it yet, but a wisdom tooth may be impacted.
- Your gums can tell us about impending gum disease and your mouth may even show...
- The early warning signs of oral cancer.

All of these dental problems can be treated and often reversed if they are spotted in the early stages.

If you are ever tempted to skip an appointment because you don't feel any pain and can't see anything wrong, think again. It's what you can't see that can cause the most trouble! Remember ... early diagnosis is key.

Q. CAN YOU GIVE ME SOME ADVICE ON LOOKING AFTER MY CHILDREN'S TEETH?

A. While brushing is essential to ensure strong teeth, it also helps to prevent socially embarrassing conditions, like bad breath. The

threat of future cavities may not hold much weight when kids are rushing out the door. Sometimes it's the social angle that prompts them to pay more attention to their smile.

Tips for kids of all ages to promote healthy teeth and fresh breath:

- Use a soft brush.
- Always use fluoride toothpaste.
- Brush your teeth at least twice daily.
- Brush your tongue gently and thoroughly and as far back as is comfortable.
- Floss daily, preferably before bed, to remove harmful food and plaque from between teeth.
- Wear a custom-fitted mouthguard when playing sports.
- Eat a balanced diet complete with milk products and crunchy vegetables.

Gum disease is often thought to be an adult problem, but children and teens are also susceptible. Just like adults, kids want to look and feel good, so encourage your child to start now to ensure a bright smile for tomorrow!

School-aged children become increasingly aware of their appearance, and the smallest thing may be the cause of self-consciousness. Their next checkup appointment will present an ideal time for the dentist to assess their smile and to discuss orthodontic options.

Now is the time to teach your child good dental habits to ensure excellent dental health for many years to come.

FOR ANY FURTHER INFORMATION OR QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT;
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Tony Jacobs

Tony Jacobs talks about his role running a dental website, enjoying modern music and moving with the times

Dentistry: What motivated you to pursue a career in dentistry?

I wanted to have a professional career, and was pleased to find a role using parts of my brain other professions do not reach.

Dentistry: What do you like most about it?

I have been very pleased to be able to have a professional role in seeing and talking to members of the public day after day, getting to know them, being able to use my 3D skills; then learning and improving those skills over the past 30-plus years.

Dentistry led me to start GDPUK, and that has taught me more about business and commerce.

Dentistry: What career path would you have chosen if you hadn't pursued dentistry?

As a child and teenager, being an architect was my chosen career. I feel I was given imperfect advice at school in the 1970s, which turned me away, but I am very pleased I entered our noble profession.

Dentistry: What gets you out of bed in the morning?

A shower then reviewing the GDPUK forum, publishing news on LinkedIn, Facebook, news and blogs on social media.

Dentistry: And what keeps you awake at night?

Nothing.

Dentistry: Describe yourself in a few words

Quiet inside, but others would say I am outgoing.

My family is very close and we have three wonderful grandchildren.

Dentistry: How do you unwind?

Golf, Manchester United and GDPUK.

Dentistry: Where's your favourite holiday destination?

USA, touring by car, or winter sunshine.

Dentistry: What's your favourite film, TV programme and book?

There are so many films I like: *Moulin Rouge*, *Kill Bill*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, *Gladiator*, *Life of Brian*, *Pulp Fiction*.

TV, I like *Curb Your Enthusiasm* and *Newsnight*.

Regarding books, I have numerous preferred authors – F Scott Fitzgerald, Iain Banks, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Isaac Bashevis Singer – but most recently I read *Sapiens* by Yuval Noah Harari.

Dentistry: Do you play any sports?

Golf. Does walking count?

Dentistry: What kind of music do you listen to?

Modern music on Spotify. *Love* by John Melland and Glastonbury always stimulates. I'm too old now for BBC Radio 1, but enjoy contemporary stuff. Live music – Bruce Springsteen, Paloma Faith, Elbow, Nile Rodgers.

Dentistry: Tell us something about yourself that others might not know

A vain answer – last year, I turned 62 years old. I am flattered people think I am younger!



Tony Jacobs

General dental practitioner
and founder of GDPUK.com

Dentistry: Anything else you'd like to add?

I hope UK dentists will find more courage to escape the overbearing yoke of the stifling NHS system and move forward to modern digital dentistry.

I am looking forward to the electric vehicle revolution in the next few years. Being an early adopter of an electric car has enhanced life. Tesla has a lot to learn, but the conventional manufacturers still need to learn more. **D**

Shameek Popat

Whisky enthusiast **Shameek Popat** expresses his thanks to his family and mentor John Kois

Dentistry: What motivated you to pursue a career in dentistry?

Well, being Indian I had a choice between medicine, dentistry or accountancy! While studying for our then 'O' levels and 'A' levels, my brother and I lived with my uncle and aunt in Stockport. My uncle is a successful dentist, and was probably the biggest influence on my brother and I choosing dentistry as our career choice. So, I would like to thank him and my amazing parents for making a lot of sacrifices and putting in a lot of hard work to put us through dental school.

Dentistry: What do you like most about it?

People tend to forget how life-changing a beautiful smile is and I love being a part of creating that beautiful, confident life-changing event.

Dentistry: What career path would you have chosen if you hadn't pursued dentistry?

I would have loved to be a professional cricketer, but, alas, I was just not good enough. I now live vicariously through my son, who is in both football and cricket academies.

Dentistry: What gets you out of bed in the morning?

I love the quote from Maurice Greene, five-time world champion 100 metre sprinter: 'Every morning in Africa, a gazelle wakes up. It knows it must move faster than the lion to survive. Every morning a lion wakes up, and it must move faster than the slowest gazelle or it will starve. It doesn't matter if you're the lion or the gazelle – when the sun comes up, you'd better be moving.'

That quote, and my wife pulling the bedcovers off!

Dentistry: And what keeps you awake at night?

A good book and WhatsApp group chats.

Dentistry: Describe yourself in a few words

Fun loving, lucky guy who enjoys a good dram of whisky.

Dentistry: How do you unwind?

Watching my son play football or cricket or going to national and international sporting events. I also have a bar at home with a fine whisky collection that I am accumulating to enjoy with friends when I retire. There is nothing like swapping stories over a fine dram with friends.

Dentistry: Where's your favourite holiday destination?

Maldives, which I call God's own paradise. Though we just had an amazing family holiday to Cancun, Mexico.

Dentistry: What's your favourite film, TV programme and book?

Gladiator, *Game of Thrones*, *Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell and *Shogun* by James Clavell.

Dentistry: Do you play any sports?

I used to play football and cricket, but, after tearing various ligaments in my knee skiing, I have become more of an armchair and sideline supporter.

Dentistry: What kind of music do you listen to?

Whatever my teenage girls allow me to!

Dentistry: Tell us something about yourself that others might not know

I have five tattoos that all have a personal meaning to me.



Shameek Popat

Practice owner, Californian Institute of Cosmetic Dentistry instructor, British Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry and British Society of Occlusal Studies member. Kois Center mentor

Dentistry: Anything else you'd like to add?

John Kois, who has been an amazing mentor to me, gave me a quote by LP Jacks: 'A master in the art of living draws no sharp distinction between his work and his play; his labour and his leisure; his mind and his body; his education and his recreation. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence through whatever he is doing, and leaves others to determine whether he is working or playing. To himself, he always appears to be doing both.'

So, love what you do. **D**