

Chatting with the chairman

Diana Spencer interviews **Mervyn Druian** about a life in practice, the importance of trusted mentorship, and saying the right thing

Diana Spencer

Chairman of Alpha Omega society (London)



Mervyn Druian

Past international president of Alpha Omega



Dr Mervyn Druian is one of the UK's leading experts in cosmetic dentistry and is the dentist behind many recognisable, famous and beautiful smiles. He has more than 30 years of experience, and in 1983 he caused a phenomenon in UK dentistry when he became the first UK dentist to introduce the practice of porcelain veneers. He was also among the first to pioneer tooth whitening.

Since then, Mervyn's cosmetic and aesthetic work has become world-renowned and he frequently lectures and teaches around the world. He is a past president of the London chapter of the Alpha Omega dental society and served as Alpha Omega's international president in 2017.

Diana Spencer (DS): Why did you choose dentistry?

Mervyn Druian (MD): As a kid, one of the highlights of my school holidays was visiting the dentist. This was my uncle George, who qualified in the 1920s. It was a real treat: he was jovial, easy-going and really happy in his job. I thought, that's what I want to do!

DS: What excites you most about the business/practice of dentistry?

MD: I absolutely love working with my team. If the team are happy, the patients are happy too. That way there is a constant can-do attitude and a positivity that reverberates throughout, whatever the day throws up.

DS: Tell me about your culture fix - how do you unwind?

MD: To unwind, I love going to my shul (synagogue), sitting quietly and enjoying the service.

I have just finished reading *Morality: restoring the common good in divided times* by Jonathan Sacks. It was an inspirational slow read, which was so enjoyable. I have just started Daniel Finkelstein's *Everything in Moderation*, which is a collection of some of his best columns for *The Times*.

I love studies in politics, but I enjoy anything that's funny or satirical too. Buddy Hackett, for instance... hilarious!

DS: What advice would you offer an upcoming dental student? Why should they join AO?

MD: The most important thing is that you have to like people! The skills can be learnt.

Alpha Omega offers an opportunity for altruism (it's a charity) and to take advantage of the social scene with other dentists as well as the mentoring and educational aspects which are so important these days.

DS: Where do you see dentistry in 5 or 10 years?

MD: I feel things will be pretty similar, but with a greater accent on prevention of dental disease. With the current demographic there will be a greater number of older patients in future who are keeping their teeth and will be a challenge restoratively.

DS: What's been your greatest challenge to date (excluding COVID-19)?

MD: It was definitely when my business partner of 30 years became ill. As well as the personal sadness over this for a friend I have known most of my working life, I then transitioned from a practice owner/partner to associate status.

DS: What's the most embarrassing thing that's ever happened to you?

MD: It's terribly non-PC I'm afraid. I asked a patient when her baby was due, and she responded that the baby was already three years old... oops!

DS: What was the best piece of advice you've ever received?

MD: My mentor was Omer Reed. It was an honour to have known him. He was a great American dentist and philosopher, and some of his 'Omerisms' are very well known... Here are just a few of them:

'If you're not paid what you're worth, you become worth what you're paid.'

'You can do anything you want to do. You just can't do everything.'

'If it's been done, it's probably possible.'

'Worry is interest you pay on a debt you don't owe.'

'Seek first to understand before being understood.'

'Work smarter, not harder.'

'You only have to floss the ones you want to keep.'

'People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.'

'Happiness is a choice. Always remember the good places when things go wrong.'

Facing new challenges

Alpha Omega has just released its lecture schedule for the coming 12 months. Attendance to all lectures is free for Alpha Omega members and students, and £60 for non-members. Full membership costs only £250 yearly. For more information, visit alphaomegauk.co.uk.

Tom Clayton - The ageing population: demographics and the future of dentistry in the UK
13 October (webinar)

Professor Paul Ashley - Managing caries in children: it doesn't need to be difficult!
17 November (webinar)

Simon Gambold - Leadership in practice
26 January 2021

Professor Simon Wright and Steve Hawkins - Developing an open reporting culture in dentistry: creating and maintaining a just culture
9 February 2021

Professor Iain Hutchison - Oral cancer, diagnosis and treatment
9 March 2021

David Bloom - Treatment options for the failing dentition
13 April 2021

Professor Ervin Weiss and Dr Michal Dekel-Steinkeller - Deep into the 21st century, will technology change your practice?
25 May 2021

Professor Eddie Scher, Ashok Sethi and Shiraz Khan - Thinking it through: the wonderful art of treatment planning
22 June 2021

DS: What's the funniest thing that happened to you in a dental surgery?

MD: As newly qualified dentist I fitted a partial upper denture. When the patient went to a restaurant, the patient sneezed and the denture flew out just as the maître d' walked past. When she related this to me later, I completely fell apart with hysterical mirth... could barely speak for a while!

DS: What advice would you give to someone setting up their own surgery?

MD: Get yourself a mentor... learn from their mistakes instead of making your own!

With the current demographic, there will be a greater number of older patients in future who are keeping their teeth and will be a challenge restoratively