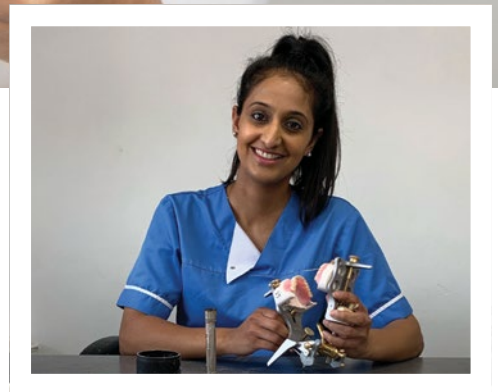


‘It really is a whirlwind of a week!’

Sheena Lakharpal, 27, is the youngest person in the country to qualify as a clinical dental technician (CDT). Sheena has worked at Bupa Dental Care’s Oswestry Dental Laboratory for three-and-a-half years. Interview by **Kate Quinlan**.

I graduated with a BSc (Hons) in Dental Technology from Manchester Metropolitan University in 2014. I had never realised that there was a specialised area in constructing dental devices for patients; I had always assumed it was a dentist who did it all. One day my secondary school teacher made me aware of the Dental Technology course and after reading up on it, I realised that being a dental technician would be a perfect job role for me, as it involves both art and science (my two favourite subjects).



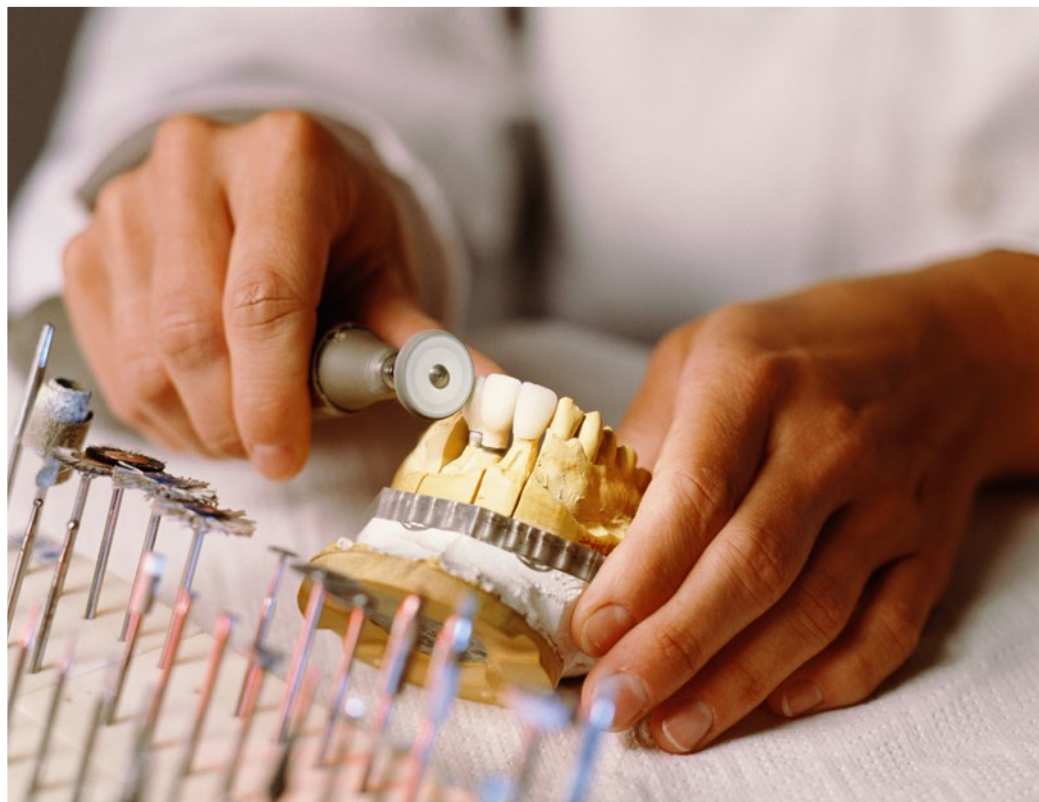
‘Although I love the laboratory side of being a dental technician, I wanted to experience how it would feel to treat patients directly from start to finish and see the rewarding results at the end.’

I studied Clinical Dental Technology at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). Once I started the course, I worked three days at Oswestry Dental Lab and studied two days every fortnight (Thursdays and Fridays) at UCLan.

I found juggling work and my studies very challenging and tiring, as not only did I have to complete several assignments for uni, but I

dentist doing surgical procedures such as removing patients' teeth and placing implants, after which I am able to fit the finished denture over the implants and take pick-up impressions - it really is a whirlwind of a week every time!

I would absolutely recommend my career path to others; if you have a passion for changing someone's life completely and are able



©Markus Dlouhy/Tax/Getty Images Plus

'If you have a passion for changing someone's life completely and are able to do it using both artistic skills and scientific knowledge, then it really is a highly satisfying career path.'

I found the course very hands-on and enjoyable, especially in practical sessions, but also quite challenging in the academic studies of dental materials and sciences. To be a dental technician you need to have a great eye for detail, manual dexterity skills, and most of all patience. At least half of our class were female.

Two years after graduating I started working here at Bupa Dental Care's Oswestry Dental Laboratory, in February 2016, which is about an hour's commute every day from home. I was taken on as a qualified dental technician.

Although I love the laboratory side of being a dental technician, I wanted to experience how it would feel to treat patients directly from start to finish and see the rewarding results at the end. I always wanted to work with members of the public and make a difference to someone's life. As a dental technician, you can only visualise the job you finish on a working model of the patient's mouth, but being able to see the patient directly in front of you is a completely different world.

had to complete patients' work back in the lab alongside my normal day's work in the lab.

My group will graduate in April 2020 and we are all very excited as the graduation ceremony will be held in Edinburgh, Scotland.

Since qualifying as a CDT, three days a week I am setting up dentures, both NHS and private, alongside some implant jobs which I am currently learning from a senior technician at the laboratory. Then for two days a week I am working alongside an implant dentist in Woking and Thames Ditton. I am able to observe the

to do it using both artistic skills and scientific knowledge, then it really is a highly satisfying career path.

In my spare time I enjoy walking my dogs, going to the gym, socialising with family and friends and most of all travelling to different destinations around the world.

One day I would love to open up my own denture clinic, but not any time soon - maybe in ten years or so.

<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41407-019-0192-5>