

A DENTIST'S LIFE

My alarm goes off just before 5.30 am and after a bit of a motivational chat with myself I get up 5-10 minutes later and throw on my gym clothes. I then do various household tasks, leave my son his snack for school and after loading up the car with handbag, gym bag and work bag I leave home between 6.10 and 6.20 am depending on which gym I'm going to. I aim to be on a machine between 6.30 and 6.40 am. Once or twice a week I have a trainer who makes no allowances for the fact that despite my 35 years I could be his mother.

I eat breakfast in my car. Always healthy – maybe salad with salmon, chia seeds and colourful veg – or sometimes porridge oats with cold milk and berries. Breakfast is my favourite meal of the day and the only one I think I deserve. By mid-afternoon I'm not so healthy and chocolate is regularly consumed!

For the last 25-26 years I have worked as a GDP at Wilmslow Dental Practice on a Tuesday. For the last 23 years I have been at Manchester Dental Hospital on Wednesdays. Every day including lunchtimes on workdays and weekends, I write reports, and evenings are often spent carrying out admin. Not to mention running a home!

Being an expert witness provides a fascinating insight into the legal world. It often takes me to London for meetings and hearings and on average I am there three times a month. My work as an expert witness has become an almost full-time occupation and I never go anywhere without a file. I also write my reports in any convenient department store that has WiFi, coffee and bathroom facilities! I have no complaints though because I love what I do.

I chose dentistry as a career because my biology teacher told me to! I started teaching three years after qualifying and was a lecturer in conservation at

NEVER TREAT A STRANGER

Hilary Firestone, who has been 35 for some time, is a GDP and Clinical Teaching Fellow at Manchester University and an expert witness for clinical negligence and GDC fitness to practise hearings. Hilary, from Hale in Cheshire, is married to property developer Terry and they have three children: Georgia, 23, currently doing a law conversion; Imogen, 19, reading land economy at Cambridge; and Ethan, 16, studying for AS levels.



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The London Hospital. Prior to that I did two years of oral surgery and then a year as a restorative SHO at Liverpool Dental Hospital. I came back to Manchester three weeks before I got married in 1985 as my husband's business was here. I then went into practice part time and started an MSc, started teaching in Manchester around 1989 and have never looked back.

With teaching I enjoy the stimulus of having to think on my feet and I learn a huge amount from the students. I have my own particular style which is fun I hope but the students know I don't tolerate a lack of common sense! I always say that I hope I can teach students how to do something in a practical but not too academic way and mostly I teach them how to be nice and engage with their patients. I firmly believe you should never treat a stranger.

Dental students have a confidence in their abilities not entirely matched by their experience. These

20-somethings have never known anything but A's and have no comprehension of what it is like not to excel. When I was a student I was happy with anything that wasn't a fail!

After a few hours of work I treat myself as a reward to a wander around the shops and generally, if I'm honest, a purchase! Clothes have always been and still are a passion. Both my daughters have inherited the shopping gene.

I usually get home between 4.30-6.30 pm. With only one child left at home it is now really easy. My husband, son and I, and the girls if they are home, eat dinner together every night. I cook healthy food but it has to be quick as cooking is not one of my favourite occupations. Friday nights and Saturdays are family home time. Saturday is also my day off from exercise but every Sunday morning at 8 am I meet my next door neighbour and we run 10 km. Every week I say, well, it doesn't get any easier!

We have several family holidays a year and always go skiing. In the last year I have been to India, the States, Israel, France, Switzerland, Spain and Portugal. Some of the trips are *en famille*, some just Terry and me, and some on my own.

If I hadn't been a dentist, I think I would have liked to have been a barrister. The older I get, the more driven I become. I have always worked and albeit part time I believe that working and having a profession is what defines me. I want to stay useful and productive for as long as I can. I want my children to be happy and healthy and then when I do retire – a thought which scares me totally – I shall finish the PhD I started years ago and put down when I became pregnant for the third time. Alternatively, I shall end my days like Mrs Thatcher, living in The Ritz and shopping.

INTERVIEW BY KATE QUINLAN