

"The best bit for me is the variety. One minute I could be treating a patient a few days old and the next an elderly patient."

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Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery trainee

Employer or university

Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust



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**How I became a
maxillofacial
surgeon**

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collapse**

I have always been a practical learner, enjoying working with my hands and using my creative side.

A keen interest in science led me to first pursue a career in dentistry. It was in my fourth year of dental school that I did placements in Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery (OMFS) and I was amazed at the breadth of the specialty. It felt like the career path I had been waiting for. It mixed the need for a scientific background with creativity.

I worked in OMFS during my dental foundation training [1] meaning I had exposure to patients of all ages while allowing me to improve my skills. It reinforced my desire to work in the specialty and I applied for medical school, which is shortened to three or four year for dental graduates.

During my medical degree, I worked part-time as a senior clinical fellow and specialty doctor in OMFS. I also worked as a dentist. Medical foundation training [1] gave me a good grounding in general medicine and taught me how best to care for patients before and after surgery.

After completing foundation training [1] I gained a place in core surgical training with rotations in OMFS, Cardiothoracic, General Surgery and ENT (Ear Nose and Throat) surgery.

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What I do

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I'm coming towards the middle of my training programme in OMFS. I am currently working in trauma, a subspecialty of OMFS which combines outpatient clinic work, surgery and on-call work.

I treat patients with complex facial fractures and soft tissue injuries. These are usually drained through the mouth while others through an incision and drainage through the neck.

My next rotation is head and neck cancer surgery. This will involve the surgical removal of facial tumours as well complex reconstruction. These operations can last more than 12 hours and require careful planning. We now use computer assisted design in operations which means we can plan effectively.

I will also do rotations in salivary gland, skin cancer surgery, facial deformity and cleft and craniofacial surgery.

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The best bits and challenges

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The best bit for me is the variety. One minute I could be treating a patient a few days old and the next an elderly patient.

The condition or disease being treated and the variety of surgical procedures in OMFS are vast. This makes the work incredibly rewarding and mentally stimulating.

Long hours can be a challenge meaning time away from family and friends. Being organised is vital so you can balance time for professional development while also have having a life outside of work.

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Life outside work

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Work life balance is important in every demanding profession and surgery is no different. Running around after a toddler certainly makes life outside of work much busier but more fun!

I also enjoy DIY and am a keen artist and always make time to socialise with family and friends.

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Career plans and top tips for others

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I am still undecided on my sub specialty as I enjoy all aspects of OMFS. However, I am really interested in reconstructive surgery and facial deformity. I also enjoy trauma surgery. Surgeons need well rounded careers so outside of the operating theatre, I am interested in leadership and management as well as research.

My top tips for anyone considering OFMS is to get as much exposure as possible to different specialties during your medical school and foundation training [1]. It will allow you to get an understanding of what is available and where to focus your efforts in the future.

You also need to look at what scores are required for your portfolio at each stage of your training. This will give you a good idea about how to improve your CV as your career progresses. Finally, be organised!

Surgical training can be mentally and physically demanding but stay focussed and enjoy the journey.

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Links

[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Foundation_training