



Why Sinead has a big smile for everyone



DOCTOR Sinead O'Hanrahan, the incoming president of the **Orthodontic Society of Ireland**, says the dental speciality has been affected by the recession. "The last five years of recession have been difficult for the profession, as they have for everybody," she says. The society, which was founded in 1990, represents the majority of Ireland's orthodontists, who align the teeth and jaw.

"The technical term for these problems is malocclusion, which literally means bad bite," says Dr O'Hanrahan. "Every patient is different, each presenting with a difference face and different teeth. My challenge is to provide the best possible result for this individual, and the job is always challenging on how to provide the best smile for that particular patient. There is ongoing improvement in orthodontics, with new braces to straighten teeth, invisible braces, lingual braces, and conventional train tracks are constantly being remodelled and improved on. Continuing professional education is essential to keep you up to-date." Orthodontists complete a five-year bachelor degree in dentistry, and a further three years on a specialist training programme recognised by the Irish Dental Council.

"Parents are more aware of their children's teeth than ever these days, and will go to great lengths to ensure they get the best treatment. Like all businesses trying to survive the downturn, orthodontists have had to be flexible and understanding about patients' ability to pay during that time," she says. "In my own practice, I am working longer hours, and much later, to maintain the level necessary to keep the business intact."

Dr O'Hanrahan is also a member of the World Federation of Orthodontists. She works in her private practice, Navan Orthodontics, and also as an orthodontic specialist with the Health Service Executive. Her practice was recently nominated for 'best specialist practice', and for 'best practice in Leinster' by the Irish Dental Awards. "An orthodontist is a dentist who is a registered specialist in orthodontics, and the most qualified person to diagnose, prevent and treat any problems relating to the alignment of teeth and jaws. Orthodontists work to ensure that the patient is biting correctly and the teeth are in harmony with the jaw and lips — and, ultimately, they work to deliver the perfect smile."

Dr O'Hanrahan obtained her degree in 1993, from Trinity College, and worked for five years in general dental practice, before completing a year as a senior house officer in Dublin. In 1999, she completed her membership and fellowship exams in general dental surgery from the Royal College of Surgeons, and returned to the Dublin Dental School as senior registrar, where she gained experience in maxillofacial surgery, oral medicine and A&E dental treatment. She then worked in the orthodontic unit at Our Lady's Hospital, Navan, and, in 2005, completed a three-year masters programme in orthodontics at the Dental School, Trinity College. She qualified as a specialist orthodontist in 2006, and presented her thesis at the European Orthodontic Society in Amsterdam.

She works part-time with the HSE in Dundalk as a specialist orthodontist, and has her private practice in Navan. Upon becoming president of the **OSI** next month, her objectives for the development of the society include: to strengthen existing relations between general dentists and specialist orthodontists; provide continuing professional education of high standards for all **OSI** members; and ensure specialist registration is maintained at the same high standard. She wants to build further upon the established **OSI** ties with specialist orthodontic colleagues across the world, especially in the UK. To this end, the **OSI** is cancelling its autumn, 2015, scientific meeting to join the British Orthodontic Society and host the World Federation of Orthodontists in London.

"We are a small society, with around 120 members, and maintaining standards and links to colleagues in other countries will be a big part of my presidency," she says. "The profession is very much about co-ordinating different specialities in delivering the best possible outcome for the patient. That kind of professional collaboration, and maintaining standards, will be to the front of what I hope to do during my presidency," she says. For its inaugural awareness campaign, the **OSI** is warning the general public against attending quick-fix 'braces clinics'. "Many of the treatments offered at these clinics, which are heavily promoted, are by dentists inexperienced in providing orthodontic treatment, but who are claiming to give a beautiful smile in six months or less. In my own career, I have spent a great deal of time in achieving my qualifications, and, given the complexity of so many of the problems encountered, I have to say I needed every bit of that training," says Dr O'Hanrahan.

"While simple straightening of teeth can be carried out in as little as six months, it is not always a long-term sol-

ution. It often takes at least 12 months to get the teeth fully corrected, biting correctly, and in harmony with the jaws and lips."

The work is rewarding, but constantly challenging, given the lack of facilities to cater properly to the public's needs. "Within the HSE there are severe challenges regarding budget cuts, recruitment embargo and long waiting lists. Within private practice, to keep yourself updated on all your health and safety, employment and radiological legal requirements, as well as your day job, can be challenging," she says. "Every patient is different, each presenting with a difference face and different teeth. My challenge is to provide a beautiful smile for this individual. The job is always interesting, and challenging, on how to do the best for any particular patient. There is ongoing improvement in orthodontics, and continuing professional education is essential to keep you up to-date."

Her personal passion is a combination of orthodontic and orthognathic surgery cases. "It opens up different possibilities of what you can achieve when you combine jaw surgery with orthodontics. The ability to subtly improve a person's face can be truly amazing, and the difference to their overall look and confidence is definitely a worthwhile endeavour." Software images give patients a visual of the end result, and show different outcomes for different treatment plans.

Dr O'Hanrahan's patient base is across all ages, with a notable increase in adult cases. "I have just finished a 66-year-old lady who was retired and wanted nicer teeth. She was right: she had raised her family and she wanted to do something for herself and I have to admire her."

Name: Dr Sinead O'Hanrahan

Occupation: President elect of the **Orthodontic Society of Ireland**

Background: A member of the World Federation of Orthodontists, she has a private practice in Navan, and is a specialist with the Health Service Executive. Her practice was nominated for 'best practice' in Leinster by the Irish Dental Awards.

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Author: SINEAD O'HANRAHAN

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Dr. Sinead O'Hanrahan says orthodontists, who specialise in tooth and jaw alignment, are working longer hours to stay viable.