



See
Rana
speak at
**Dentistry Live
2014**
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Profile

Position

Specialist in periodontics, practice principal

Qualifications

BDS MFDS RCS (Eng)

Dental interests

Lasers in periodontics, cosmetic periodontics, risk-factors and stress related to periodontal disease

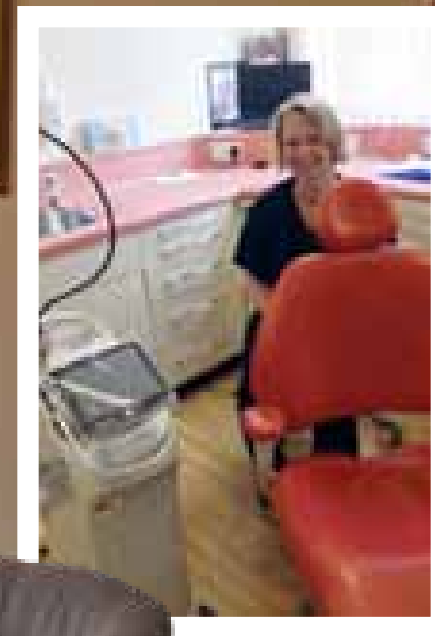
Interests out of dentistry

Fitness, travel

Periodontist and laser expert **Rana Al-Falaki** talks to PPD about her love of speaking at world-renowned institutions around the world and her forthcoming lecture at Dentistry Live

Dr Rana Al-Falaki





WITH CONTINUED WORK AND RESEARCH, WE CAN SHOW THAT THE USE OF PARTICULAR LASERS IN PERIO CAN REVOLUTIONISE THE FIELD OF PERIODONTICS



Rana Al-Falaki was born in the UK to Arabic parents, in London, where she has lived all her life. 'I qualified from Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry in 1997. I then spent a few years in general professional training, doing VT, general practice and community, before embarking on a specialist training pathway in Periodontology which I also carried out at Barts and The London, and was entered into the GDC specialist list for periodontics in 2003.'

She originally did not consider dentistry as a career choice as she had a love for mathematics and statistics and wanted to teach. However, it was family member who urged her to change her mind. 'My aunt was a dentist in Bahrain – a periodontist in fact, and that was my main family influence to proceed with a career in dentistry. Most of my family come from a background of a basic degree, masters and PhD, so I then thought a five-year dentistry course was a fair trade! I loved the idea of being able to help people, and made it my personal challenge to become a dentist who people weren't scared to go and see. Dentistry encompasses so much more than a set of teeth – you can make so much difference to people's quality of life, and that's what ultimately attracted me the most,' she explains.

So why periodontics in particular? 'My personality is very much the type who wants to be the best I can possibly be, so that was my drive to specialise,' Rana explains. 'As an undergraduate, perio was the one discipline that made so much sense to me and that I didn't find stressful in any way. It incorporates so much



medicine in its pathogenesis, as well as psychology, with needing behavioural changes and good communication with your patients, and is also a surgical discipline.'

SPREADING THE WORD

Teaching is something that Rana is extremely passionate about. 'Having an understanding of what my undergraduates and post-grads were going through, having been there myself, and showing them that empathy really seemed to make a difference,' she says. 'When I think back to teachers that have inspired me – that may well be why going into perio seemed so attractive – the fact that I had great teachers. Teaching and lecturing is an enjoyable break from the clinical work, and an opportunity to inspire the dental profession. I no longer teach in the hospital – no time with a busy practice and three kids! But my lecturing has taken me all round the world, which has given me the opportunity to enjoy my other hobby of travelling. I've been able to meet dentists and academics from around the globe. Comparing notes is great!'

Lasers in periodontics is a field that Rana is very experienced in and her belief is evident. 'Well I have been described as a pioneer in this subject, but I truly believe in it, which is why I'm doing so much research in it,' she explains. 'To back up the hearsay, I am lecturing on the topic all round the world. The results we've consistently had have been astounding, and we've been able to achieve so much more for our patients, without needing to submit them to surgery and with far less pain and less expense. It gives me a buzz every time. With continued work and research, we can show that the use of particular lasers in perio can revolutionise the field of periodontics. The main findings are resolution of deep pockets, even up to 15mm, without needing to carry out surgery, and regeneration of bone in cases where bone-grafting surgery would typically otherwise have been needed. The healing is faster, with less pain, less recession and less sensitivity than conventional treatment. Surgery, when we do it, has fewer post-op complications and we can even do things like crown lengthening with bone removal without even raising flaps.'

Rana will be speaking at the forthcoming show Dentistry Live and will be presenting a talk on 'Lasers in periodontics and periimplantitis - the way forward'. 'I'm really looking forward to speaking at Dentistry Live on the Friday 13th June,' says Rana. 'I'll be showcasing all applications of lasers in the field of periodontics and treatment of peri-implantitis, and giving some insight into their mechanisms of action.'

CLOSER TO HOME

Rana first set up her practice Al-FaPerio in the city of London in 2004. 'It was a perio-only practice, and allowed me to work exactly how I wanted to, and be able to look after my patients, my way, rather than being an associate,' she says. 'We re-located in 2009 to the outskirts of London, on the Essex borders, in Buckhurst Hill in 2009. It's in a leafy village-like street but just a few minutes' walk from the tube station. I did that in my second maternity leave, as I realised having two children would need me to be closer to home.'

The practice operates from one surgery, and Rana works with most of the dentists in the surrounding areas. 'We actually now get referrals from all around the UK and overseas,' she explains. 'It's a perio-only practice, and I try as much as possible to work as very much part of a team – still with the dentist and hygienists, rather than taking over completely and the patients never seeing their dentists or hygienists again. I have three other periodontists working with



me, and we cover all aspects of perio – so gum diseases, recession defects, cosmetic perio, perio-plastics surgery, maintenance and peri-implantitis, all incorporating the use of lasers nowadays too.'

'I know it sounds corny,' admits Rana, 'but getting great results at the two-month reassessment stage, and realising how much difference you've made to that patient's life. When a patient thanks you that they no longer wake up with blood on their pillow, they don't have bad breath anymore, and can eat more confidently – you feel good.'

With a young family Rana tries hard to maintain a balance with work and family life. 'I am married with three young children, aged two, five and six, which keeps me busy outside dentistry.

I love working out – that's very much my stress relief. I don't work a full five-day week either, so that gives me a bit of time to catch up on paperwork, and then really be with my kids come the weekend. Finding the balance is difficult, and having a supportive and understanding husband certainly helps. In fact, having a husband who is a dentist is a blessing – he keeps me grounded, and at the same time understands what I do.' And Rana says that her husband is one dentist that she really admires. 'I have to say that - especially as I see so many of his patients, and they all tell me how wonderful he is! I think for me the one professional who I admire the most is someone who has been my undergraduate and post-grad teacher and is now an invaluable colleague and that is Professor Francis Hughes, now a Professor in Periodontology at Guys Hospital.

EXCITING TIMES

Rana is very excited about the future of the profession. 'Dentistry has definitely become more technology based in the last ten years – I can certainly vouch for that! Prevention is being emphasised much more, but at the same time, from what I hear from my colleagues, the new graduates seem to be coming out with far less experience than we had, which is a shame if this is the case. It's also a real shame that jobs aren't so available either – that is something I never would have imagined 10 years ago, and yet the public demand is so high.

On a personal level Rana aims to keep working hard, carry on teaching, lecturing and do more research. 'I'm in the process of setting up the International Periodontal Laser User Society (I-PLUS),' she says. 'I'm doing this



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so that anyone needing more information and guidance on laser perio has an unbiased source to refer to, and I'm working with periodontists around the world to set this up, so watch this space! ■