Contribute to the future of the profession …

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Hi, I’m Paul, an Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon and Head of Oral Maxillofacial Surgery at the South Australian Dental Service. I started with the South Australia Dental Service (SA Dental) at the end of 1984, so it’s been almost 30 years.

I completed my specialist training through the Royal Adelaide Hospital after that. I have a specialist dental and medical degree. At the time this was not a requirement however I could see the writing on the wall regarding this and decided to invest in this training to pre-empt the change.

Giving back

I decided to join the public system as I felt I owed the system something – after receiving all the training. I find the work fascinating and I enjoy the interaction with patients. Working in the public services allows you to provide a great community service I also work part time in the private sector and this provides an ideal balance.
The majority of the work I do is trauma work – which includes accidents or falls, as well as surgical issues resulting from throat and mouth cancer, we provide the full range of surgical procedures in dentistry which includes extractions and dental implants. For those who are considering working for SA Dental (in any of the technician, therapist or dentist roles) – you will receive support from the specialists who are always available by phone, for advice or in person to see a patient or discuss cases. The SA Dental Service has a mutually supportive culture which encourages diversity and equality in the workplace.

Supportive environment

I believe that choosing SA Dental as an employer is a good move for dental surgeons who have completed their specialist training because we really support one another. You can enjoy the opportunity to teach and learn. It is a diverse role that I have as a specialist but you can interact with the whole hospital system and enjoy the support that the organisation gives.

I think that the public system is a good place to work as you can utilise the entire scope of your practice training. It is an opportunity to be involved in training and the provision of treatment. If I was speaking to a graduate dentist I would say that it is an ideal opportunity to increase their skills to a particular level.

Achieving my goals

In terms of goals, I have achieved most of my career goals while working for the SA Dental Service, such as running the training pathway in Australia and New Zealand for OMS as chair of the Board of Studies, being president of the Australia New Zealand Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (ANZAOMS) and contributing as Oceania representative on the executive of the International Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons (IAOMS).

A real contribution

I am currently working on an international credentialing process that will credential surgeons in areas where there is not a well-developed training and assessment strategy. This is to create a standard process and to set a minimum standard that dental specialists can demonstrate if they are looking to work as a specialist in their own country. This is a project initiated by IAOMS.