

Academy of Orthodontic Assisting

Graduate Profile - Personal Interview

PROFILE - Alarna Pungar

Mackay, Queensland Australia
Senior Dental Assistant, Torque Orthodontics

History of employment in orthodontics:

- 10 Years
- Completed Certificate III in Dental Assisting (2005)
- Completed Certificate IV in Dental Assisting: Intra & Extra Oral Radiography License (2007)

Year you completed the AOA online or hands-on course:

September 2008 Finished AOA online course and attended hands-on course in Dunedin New Zealand in October 2008.

Topics of your presentation:

Diagnostic Records - Make or Break Treatment Outcomes

Main objective of the presentation:

To provide useful tips for taking diagnostic records including impression taking using the baggie delivery system & clinical photography. This presentation would be beneficial for any clinical assistant.

Why do you enjoy working in the orthodontic field?

Enjoying your work is all about keeping motivated. Orthodontics for me is that motivation. In my senior dental assistant position at Torque Orthodontics. I am actively involved in training of staff, rosters, ordering stock, keeping up to date with new products, equipment maintenance, infection control policy and procedures and attending conferences. Orthodontics enables me to keep learning and improving on my skills such as gaining my qualifications in intra-oral and extra-oral radiography. The highlight of my career was presenting at the recent World Federation Orthodontic Conference in Sydney. Orthodontics is a field of dentistry where our patients want to visit us and enjoy being involved in our practice. Any negative thoughts that the patient may have about orthodontic treatment disappears as the appearance of their teeth improves.

As an orthodontic assistant you follow that patient throughout their treatment from the initial meet and greet consultation and records, braces on appointments, minor adjustments along the course of the treatment and finally at the most exciting day of their life, the braces off appointment!



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I feel a sense of fulfillment and achievement that I played an active role in that journey. We make life-changing effects and boost our patient's self-esteem in the process of straightening their teeth and correcting their bite. Our patients really appreciate the experience of receiving their treatment at Torque Orthodontics. That in itself is empowering. Finally, know where you and your practice currently stand in relation to skills, knowledge and customer service. What you consider are your strengths and what the practice needs to improve upon is a never ending process.

What is needed to further education for hygienists/assistants?

Training programs in the future for Orthodontic assistants and hygienists need to have a strong focus on not only the theoretical component but also the practical component. Past experience has shown us that courses provided by tertiary institutions have allocated only a minor percentage of clinical time to gaining orthodontic skills. This is the factor that I identify as a weakness from the majority of training providers. Students that complete their practical components in these tertiary institutions can lack the clinical, hands on skills required when they enter the workforce. Providing students with the opportunity to complete some of their practical orthodontic components in the field can give them the true feel of the dynamics of a successful working Orthodontic practice. In addition, course providers need to be mindful of the legal issues involved with regard to duties and responsibilities of orthodontic assistants and hygienists. Duties and responsibilities are currently governed by state and national dental boards. Presently in Australia these are different for each state.

Goals for the Future:

My goal for the future is to work toward improving career paths for our profession. The skills I have acquired over last ten years from my career at Torque Orthodontics provides me with the tools (which includes formal and non-formal training) and confidence achieve this goal.