

# NEW LIFE AND FRESH BEGINNINGS

Interview with Hitesh Panchal



and Deepa Vakil



How a continually growing community and population at Media City UK in Manchester has seen its dental practice thrive

A bright green, shooting seedling, signifying new life, fresh beginnings and the promise of something beautiful is the suitably fitting logo of Dental @ MediaCityUK. Back in 2011, this new venture was indeed the start of a new life for husband and wife partnership Hitesh Panchal and Deepa Vakil and is now a flourishing private practice, located right in the heart of MediaCityUK at Salford Quays.

Deepa recalls, 'We were both working as associates in Lytham St Annes but had a real motivation to do dentistry differently. Our jobs were good but sometimes when you are an associate you can feel restricted by other people's ideas and agenda; over time this can feel frustrating. We felt very strongly about creating a practice with our own brand of patient-led dentistry where excellent customer service would be combined with state of the art equipment and the staff would make patients feel part of the family.'

Deepa and Hitesh started looking at different areas in the northwest to find the ideal location for their new business. The couple were attracted to Salford Quays as an area with significant anticipated population growth. The creation of MediaCityUK and the announcement in 2006 that the BBC would be relocating there from London meant the area was expected to grow significantly. The couple decided to take the plunge and signed contracts to build a new practice from scratch.

## BLANK CANVAS

Deepa remembers, 'Our new practice started life as six car parking spaces in the MediaCityUK multi storey carpark. We weren't phased by this completely blank canvas as right from the beginning we had a clear vision of what we wanted to achieve. We relocated our home to be on the doorstep of the new practice and set about transforming



the concrete space into a modern, three-surgery space.'

The conversion took four months and the practice opened in October 2011 with Deepa working full time while Hitesh continued as an associate back in Lytham. Initially two surgeries were fully fitted out, Deepa explains the rationale, 'As a new business we couldn't afford any downtime from equipment failure so we decided to fully equip two

surgeries. I worked in one and the other was a backup and served as motivation for us to get on board enough patients to justify the investment.'

Eight years down the line the couple are now both working at the practice alongside two associates, two hygienists and a specialist in orthodontics. 'We've built up our client base solely through word of mouth and our website, which I built myself to save



money in the early days when we were first launching. Many of our patients work in the media, both in front of and behind the cameras and include directors, producers and presenters along with residents.'

**TIME TO GROW**

By July 2019 the couple decided patient demand warranted commissioning of the fourth surgery and turned to McKillops Dental Ltd to help with the design, supply and install of the equipment. Deepa explains, 'The company was recommended by a friend and from our first meeting with Simon Pearce we found the team very professional and responsive. When it came to completing our fourth surgery earlier this year, we didn't look anywhere else. MediaCityUK continues to expand and right now there are eight new apartment blocks being built. We wanted to be ready for this influx of new people to the Quays so asked Simon to work with us

again on the surgery design and equipment provision to the budget we had in mind.'

The fourth surgery space was tight so space-saving solutions were required, 'I wanted a chair solution that would allow space for manoeuvre whilst allowing the room to continue to be used for patient consultations when required. The ideal solution to meet both requirements was the Belmont Cleo folding leg-rest chair with its upright seating position and small footprint. All the pipework was already in place and we'd done our research and knew what we wanted and how we like to work. Simon made the whole process easy for us and design to completion of the installation took just one month. McKillops carried out the work while the rest of the practice was still open and cleaned up after themselves before they left. The whole process was managed seamlessly while we went on holiday!'

With the fourth surgery about to be

commissioned Deepa is very optimistic about the practice's future, 'We're committed to the ongoing growth of the practice and have learnt plenty of lessons along the way. My advice to anyone considering setting up their own practice would be, if you have a plan, stick to it! We can honestly say, we've never looked back.' ●

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