

Capturing the imagination

A look at one practice's journey to its new reality.



Employees face many health problems at work, and the healthcare industry has some of the most hazardous environments.

Work is a recognised social determinant of health, which is why the Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) outlines provisions to ensure the health, safety and welfare of everyone in the workplace.

Dentistry has its own unique set of job-related challenges. Occupational health hazards include stress, high workload and mental strain – but also ergonomic considerations.

Indeed, there has been a marked

deterioration of mental health and wellbeing in the profession in recent years. The paper, *Using the Mental Health Wellness Framework in dental practice*, suggests it is only logical that “protecting a team's mental wellness will have a positive impact on morale and in turn improve patient experience and safety”.

Additionally, whilst dental patients generally elect to attend clinic, there is often an element of fear or anxiety that can impact the stress levels of practitioners and their teams who must manage the patient experience.

Nurturing a holistically focused,

safe and healthy environment can therefore support the psychological wellbeing of patients and staff. The FDI World Dental Federation suggests “improved office design can help reduce practitioner stress and improve wellbeing”.

One way to achieve this is to incorporate biophilic design into spaces that transfers the positive effects of exposure to nature into the workplace, helping people to relax or cope with stressful situations.

Across all industries, interior design now factors heavily in the overall efforts to attract, and retain, staff. As a result, ➔

Can an increasing number of business owners are seeking ways to enhance a workspace that aid employee performance and support a sense of wellbeing.

Among them is Dimitri Mantazis. A dentist of some 17 years, interwoven into his desire for dental excellence is the creation of an environment that supports this caring and compassionate approach to patient health and the wellbeing of his staff. His recent development of a squat practice in Hove, East Sussex, reflects this mindset.

Dimitri and his team have been delivering private care to a burgeoning patient base for seven years. With a clinic already established in the upmarket seaside resort, but without room to expand, he found the ideal second site in empty offices below a modern apartment block just a short distance away. And when it came to the design, uppermost in his mind was the need for a space where patients and staff would be happy.

“Coming to the dentist can be a very stressful experience for some people, so walking into a serene and relaxing environment was important. I think we have achieved this,” Dimitri explained.

The ‘we’ included Dentalbuild. Together they have created a contemporary practice that draws on some of the ideals of biophilic design, with statement plants, vibrant blue feature walls, sunset-themed murals and wall art bringing the outside indoors. Other welcoming touches include the warm lighting, wood-effect flooring and colourful splashes of pink and blue in the sofas in the spacious waiting area.

The colours are more muted in the surgeries, with mottled grey cabinetry and flooring. But there is still a pop of colour in each room in the new Belmont Eurus treatment centres Dimitri had installed – each surgery showcasing a different colour chair.

With phase two of Hove Dental Clinic now complete, Dimitri says that although there were obstacles to overcome in developing the squat practice, the rewards have been in the reactions he has received.

“It really helps that the feedback has been great – this makes it worthwhile,” he commented.



Having built a reputation for excellent dental care for more nervous patients, this need for a place where they may relax mattered to him greatly.

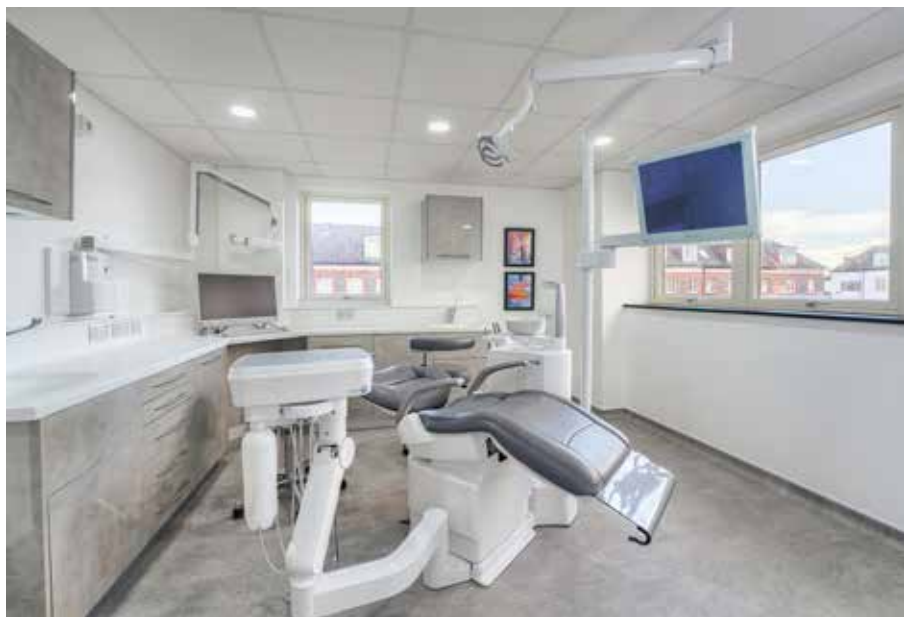
“We have a reputation for attracting really anxious people. Covid-19 impacted patient confidence some of whom were elderly patients scared to leave their house during the pandemic. When they finally came to see us, it was important we welcomed them into an inviting environment.”

The new clinic opened in February. Having worked as an associate for a corporate in Brighton, Dimitri is delighted to see his long-time dream become a reality. “We had outgrown the site at Salisbury Road where

expansion was unviable. We needed to see patients quicker and build on our patient base. Developing a business is always challenging; it’s been quite a journey.

“We began looking for a new site at the start of last year and came across this commercial site in Portland Road – an empty ground floor and first floor space with flats above. After a long search, I had finally found a location that captured my imagination and ideas and where I could see my vision come to life.”

The new development is home to several dentists and a team of hygienists. Dimitri sought universal appeal for staff and patients. ➔



“I didn’t want a bog-standard dental practice. I wanted a clinic that helped those who entered feel relaxed and comfortable. Coming to a dentist is already extremely hard for many people. I just wanted to create a calm atmosphere. I also wanted a welcoming place for staff. We spend so much time at work, that it was important to have a workplace where we all wake up in the morning and look forward to coming in. Staff happiness matters and I am grateful to the people I work with – I cannot fault them.”

For Dimitri, great practice design is ‘part of the whole’ in his delivery of excellent dentistry.

“We wish to provide a service that

goes beyond the usual dental care experience many people have become used to. We hope our patients feel at home, cared for, pampered and looked after in a relaxing environment.”

He has fulfilled his plan to provide the best evidence-based dentistry and matched this with an environment that reflects the level of care. Every dental material has been selected for its performance and quality – irrespective of the cost. And the installation of the colourful Belmont Eurus chairs was a part of this thinking.

“I think the Belmont Eurus is amazing. I have worked on many chairs, and Belmont ticks all the boxes. It is, after all, the most important piece

of equipment and a place where I spend all of my day. It is important to have something reliable, comfortable – and that works well.

‘Developing a squat practice is a marathon not a sprint. Every month brings its own challenges, but a healthy working environment is paramount. We spend so much time at work, why not add more to make it an inviting place? I felt that if I created a space where I was happy, then it would be great for others, too. The dental environment brings unique stress, so anything to mitigate this is worth the investment.’

References available on request.