



Profile

Position

Periodontist at London Periodontics and Implant Dentistry, as well as Diabetes Dental Care, specialist clinical teacher Guy's Hospital

Qualifications

BDS PhD Adv Dip Periodontology

Dental interests

Microsurgical soft tissue management and periodontal disease in the diabetic population

Interests outside of dentistry

Spending time with friends and family, painting, playing sports, travelling

With an interest in diabetes dental care, specialist clinical teacher of periodontology at KCL Guys Hospital, **Leticia Casanova** speaks to PPD about her quest to keep educating herself and others along the way

Leticia Casanova





Leticia Casanova is a specialist clinical teacher at Guy’s hospital who teaches in the periodontology department of both undergraduate and postgraduate students. She is currently completing her PhD in medicine, investigating the links between periodontal disease and systemic diseases such as diabetes.

Born in Santander in Spain, Leticia grew up between Spain and the USA as her parents who were doctors worked in Minnesota for many years. ‘That great experience probably led me to consider going back to New York to study postgraduate education once I had become a dentist,’ she explains. ‘I always wanted to do something related to medicine as I come from a family with a long tradition in medicine and I like personal relations. However, having seen it at home, I felt that certain areas of medicine would be difficult to practice on a daily basis. I felt inspired by my dentists and I always had a great experience when they treated me,’ she adds. However, after a year working in practice, Leticia succumbed and started a PhD in medicine. ‘I learnt about the connection between periodontal disease and systemic health and decided to train as a periodontist. My dentists, with whom I worked, also mentioned that Santander had a big shortage of good periodontists. Little did I know that I would not be going back home’.

NEVER STOP LEARNING

In 2007, Leticia moved to the New York University College of Dentistry in the USA where she completed two years full-time postgraduate training in periodontics and was awarded the Fellowship in Periodontology. Her responsibilities included a teaching position in the undergraduate periodontics program and she has also been awarded first place in postgraduate research in periodontics. ‘I had a great time while studying there,’ she says. ‘Everybody was incredibly motivated to learn more and be outstanding in whatever field





they were training. This attitude was tremendously contagious and led me to make the most of my training. I can see one difference between NYU (where I studied), and Guy's Hospital (where I teach). It is the large impact the NHS system has had toward the approach to treatment planning. I think the fact that some dental treatments are covered by the NHS is a great asset for the UK, however, I feel it might sometimes jeopardise the goal of dental excellence that is aimed for in the States for example.' But Leticia's quest for education and bettering herself has not ended.

'I think you never stop learning,' she says. 'I try to keep up to date by going to conferences and courses on a specific topic of interest, such as accelerated orthodontics, where I can apply a technique where the orthodontic treatment time can be reduced by two thirds,' she adds.

TEACHING AND PRACTISING

As well as educating herself, Leticia teaches at Guy's hospital. 'I teach in the periodontology department of both undergraduate and postgraduate (dentists who are training to become periodontists) students.' In addition, she lectures to diabetologists and diabetic patients about the impact of diabetes on the oral health and vice versa. 'This is a journey that began after I started Diabetes Dental Care, a dental practice aimed to look after the oral health problems of patients with diabetes,' she explains. 'It is great to see the growing interest of medical doctors, and the benefits that good oral health care can have over the general health of an individual, particularly people with diabetes.' 'This is a new venture that I am so passionate about. Diabetes Dental Care focuses on helping the diabetic patient control their diabetes through controlling their oral health, ie controlling their periodontal disease, fungal infections etc.'

She also practices at London Periodontics and Implant Dentistry (LPID), where she concentrates on periodontal and cosmetic soft tissue treatments such as crown lengthening, root coverage procedures, accelerated orthodontics and general periodontics and implant treatment.

Her husband Dr David Holmes is an implant dentist whom she works with. 'My husband takes care of the bigger and more complex implant and bone grafting cases at LPID,' she explains. 'He really has a talent in that field, having a very deep understanding of the implant techniques and restorative options available, as well as knowing the science behind it from his Master of Science in biomaterials where he studied implant surfaces and bone-graft materials. On the other hand, having had implant treatment himself, he is aware of many patient care aspects of treatment that are not so obvious when you have not been a patient yourself.'

WORK SATISFACTION

When asked what the most satisfying aspect of her work is, Leticia says that being able to deliver a result with which the patient is thrilled with is very rewarding. She says, 'being able to support other dental colleagues is extremely satisfying. And thinking that one day, by educating and informing the medical doctors and diabetic patients, we could really include oral health in the multidisciplinary care of the diabetic patient.'

'Being opened minded and trying to think outside the box when possible is key,' ■

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Contact

London
Periodontics and
Implant Dentistry
020 7563 9989



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