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# The Walpole Street Practice

Julian English visited Eddie Scher to discuss what goes on at the Walpole Street Practice – one of the UK's leading centres of implantology and education

**T**here is no doubt that Edwin Scher (or Eddie, as he insists) is one of the UK's foremost and best-known implant practitioners. As the chairman of this journal's editorial board, and as an organiser of advanced surgical courses, he maintains a high profile in the dental world.

His base of operations is The Walpole Street Practice, where he maintains a staff of eight and accepts referrals from around the country.

### Background

Eddie qualified at UCH back in 1973, and spent 11 years in general dental practice. Having completed the introductory and intermediate courses at the Dawson Center, and Mike Wise's Advanced Course, he began restricting his practice to prosthodontics and implant dentistry. He has been successfully placing implants since 1986. In 1990 he founded 'The Osseointegrated Year Course', which continues to this day. He is recognised by the General Dental Council as a specialist in two fields, Oral Surgery and Prosthodontics.

His postgraduate experience is too long to list. He fills the position of full visiting professor in the Prosthodontic and Implant Department of Temple University, Philadelphia, and is examiner for the ICOI and chairman of its World Congress. He is a past president and committee member of the ADI, as well as being scientific chairman of its international congress. For two years, he was scientific chairman of the Royal College of Surgeons' Implant Masterclass.

Eddie estimates that his workload is '90% implant or implant-related', and keeps abreast of all the latest developments in implantology. He estimates that he completed over 200 hours of CPD last year.

### The practice

The Walpole Street Practice opened in 1990. The Walpole Street Practice opened in 1990. Eddie was previously located in Knightsbridge, but was forced to move due to planning prob-



Eddie Scher at work

lems. Eddie states that 'me and the bank' own the freehold of the new place.

The whole building has been completely renovated in the last three years. In the early days, surgeries were located in the basement and first floor, whilst Eddie had an apartment upstairs. 'We were using my waiting room as a lecture theatre,' he says.

Now the facilities are truly state-of-the-art, with a purpose-built lecture theatre upstairs with space for 12 or 13 delegates. It has a 50-inch high definition screen, as well as air conditioning.

There are two main surgeries, a surgery for the hygienist and an operating room. Eddie says, 'We need to have a dedicated room for

# Implant practice profile

surgery, in order to keep to the sterility standards I believe we should be achieving.'

There is a high definition video camera (which was the first in the country, he claims) in the surgery, linked to the lecture theatre upstairs. A microphone allows delegates to talk to Eddie during the procedures that they watch live upstairs. 'The whole set-up works very nicely,' he says.

The operating room is replete with all necessary equipment - digital X-ray machine, pulse-oxometer, Piezosurgery, oxygen and so on. A defibrillator is next on the practice purchase list. Cross-infection control is paramount, with a special sterilising room between the operating room and surgery.

Ornate ceiling murals in each surgery give patients something to feast their eyes upon. Each room has a different theme. In Eddie's surgery, Escher's 'Metamorphosis of an Alligator' is transformed into a novel scene, in which alligators seek implant solutions for missing teeth.

Before becoming one of the practice hygienists, Alison Hodson worked as an artist and painted the murals herself. The one in her own surgery is homage to Raphael's 'Sistine Madonna'. Staff members are depicted as cherubs - baby photographs were used as picture references.

## Staff

Working alongside principal dentist Eddie Scher are various experts in their respective fields. He has two associates: Hafeez Ahmed specialises in periodontics, with a particular interest in gum disease around implants, and Shirin Ali is a dental surgeon with a special interest in cosmetic and restorative dentistry. The hygienists are the aforementioned Alison Hodson and Gillian Levine. Practice manager Diane Barnes has been with Eddie for 22 years and was previously head nurse, giving her a wealth of knowledge about the delivery of implantology. Current head nurse Sarah Hunter is on maternity leave, but apparently possesses the 'supernatural skills of having four hands at once'. Alice Edwards has recently joined and is an 'exceptionally good implant nurse'. Nicola Cook is the other 'super nurse' in the team, which is rounded out by administrator Belinda McBride, whose legal background provides a wealth of experience to the practice.

Other specialists regularly working at the practice include maxillofacial surgeon Simon Holmes, who harvests hip bone whilst working in tandem in Eddie, allowing him to get on with the grafting. Tom McEwen is an anaesthetist - a senior consultant who was Head of Department at the Eastman - who comes to



The main surgery

the practice every second day to provide sedation for nervous patients.

Eddie is keen to emphasise that the practice maintains a friendly ambience. 'The patients remember the staff,' he says. 'It is not frightening, but a very inviting place to come.'

## How it works

Eddie finds himself in the operating theatre at least once a day. Treatment generally takes place over three phases. Phase one is consultation, phase two is the surgical stage, and the third phase is restorative.

When Eddie is not running his own teaching programme or lecturing internationally, he spends a lot of time advising dentists. 'There is always an open door and I always answer any question,' he says.

'We get a lot of cases referred to us for help. Recently, I had a patient come in for half an hour, sent by one of my referring dentists. I could have easily grabbed the case, but I referred it back to him because I decided that bridgework was the best way forward - something the dentist could absolutely do himself, rather than make it an implant case. I try to

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In the second surgery

play fair.

'My colleagues expect me to be honest with them, but it goes much further than that. I have a responsibility to advise when not to go ahead with something too complicated.' He often has multi-disciplinary meetings with colleagues to decide on the best way forward for very difficult cases.

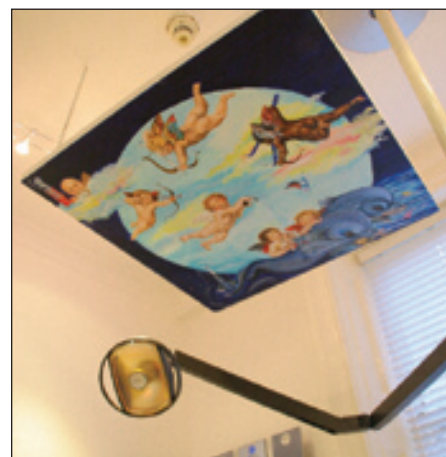
One way that he stays on top of recent dental developments is through the journal club he runs. 'Each colleague in the group is given a journal. Every two months, we have a three-hour meeting. Each person has a responsibil-

ity to bring the important items from the journal they are reading to the meeting, update us and make sure we keep ahead of everything.' New guided surgery techniques are his current passion.

Away from dentistry, Eddie enjoys walking his dog, golf, skiing, watching football and getting the latest gadgets. He has no plans to slow down just yet, despite the realisation that he could have a much easier life and make a lot more money by selling the practice and becoming a salaried employee. But that is not something he is about to do. 'I value my inde-



Alligators demonstrate the implant process in one of the attractive ceiling murals



Another ceiling mural painted by hygienist Alison Hodson, depicting staff members as cherubs



The dedicated lecture theatre, featuring seating for 12 and a 50-inch high definition plasma screen

pendence,' he states.

And what is his main message for his colleagues in the dental profession? 'Be cautious and careful with implant dentistry.'