

Young Islander takes over dental practice in rural PEI

by Gloria Welton

Dr. Sean Curley, a recent graduate from the Dalhousie Doctor of Dental Surgery program, took over **Hampton Dental Clinic** from Peter Bevan Baker in August, 2016.

Sean was born and raised in Charlottetown. “I wanted to live and work on PEI,” says Sean. “After graduating, I came back to the Island and realized there is quite a bit of opportunity for new graduates.”

After Sean graduated, he worked part-time with a few practices. He found the right fit in Hampton, which had the same dental philosophy as his own. “With Peter being elected as a member of the Green party, he didn’t have much time for dentistry, so we started talking about me purchasing the practice.”

“Owning a practice is definitely more responsibility and more work, but you have complete control. It was a big advantage to work at the clinic before taking over, as I was able to meet most of the patients, allowing for an easier transition.”

Deciding on a career in dentistry

“During high school, I did some research to decide what I was going to do. I was big into science, but I didn’t want to get into academia and I wanted something that I would find interesting.”

He wanted a career where he could interact with people and do hands-on work. “Based on my interests and abilities, Dentistry made sense to me. I did my science degree at UPEI, and then worked for a year with a pharmaceutical company before being accepted by three dental schools.

“I chose Dalhousie based on their strong clinical program. Students work on patients full-time for the last two years of the program. It is also the closest dental school to home, which made it an easy choice.”

Prerequisites for acceptance into a dental program

Applicants must take a standardized Dental Aptitude Test (DAT) that evaluates areas such as manual dexterity, perceptual ability, reading comprehension, and knowledge of natural sciences. These results are considered along with your undergraduate grades. An interview at the dental school is also required. Volunteer work is looked upon favourably, so Sean volunteered at the QEH emergency room for a few years.

“I applied to a handful of programs, but Dalhousie was always my top pick. It is quite an investment--the cost of tuition is now about \$40,000 per year. Halifax is also an expensive city to live in. Most students max out their student loans and then still have to go to the bank for a student line of credit. It is quite a bit of debt upfront, but if you work hard, the end is in sight.”

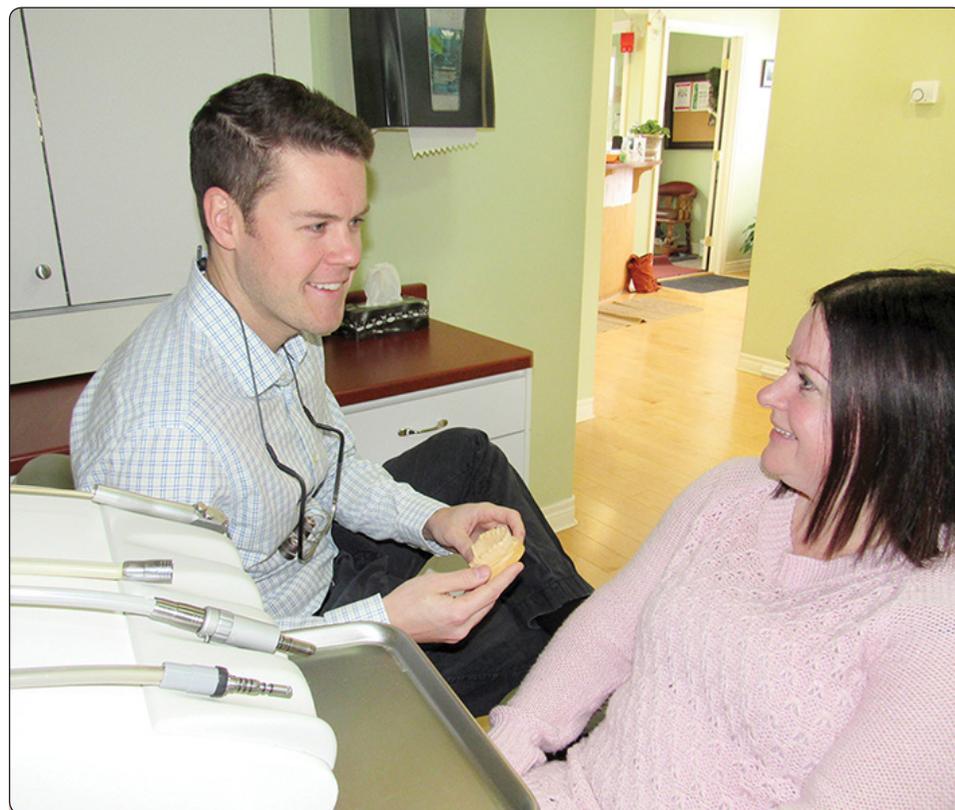
About the staff

The practice has two full-time Dental Hygienists, a full-time Dental Assistant, and a full-time Office Receptionist. They see patients Monday to Thursday, 8:00 to 4:00. “Most of the staff has been with the practice for several years, which was of great benefit to me as I took over.”

Dental Assistants

As a member of the dental team, Dental Assistants assist the dentist at the chair side. Some of their duties include providing intraoral care such as the application of fluoride on teeth to prevent tooth decay, taking radiographs, and taking dental impressions.

In addition, they are responsible for instrument sterilization, working with dental models in the laboratory, and in many practices help to manage the dental office and order supplies.



Dr. Sean Curley is the new owner of the Hampton Dental Clinic. “It is a great clinic to work at because of the experienced staff and friendly patients,” says Sean. “Our patients come from all over the Island. When people find a practice they like, they stick with it.”

Dental Hygienists

Approximately 80 Dental Hygienists are licensed on PEI. They provide treatment and information related to the prevention of diseases and disorders of the teeth and mouth. Some duties include treatment of gum diseases, application of fluorides and/or dental sealants to prevent tooth decay, scaling and polishing, and oral health education. In addition, Dental Hygienists provide oral health education in communities, especially in vulnerable population groups.

“Dental hygiene has historically been a female-dominated profession. However, there are more and more males entering the field,” says Sean. “Each year, there are increased numbers of males taking the program. We have a male hygienist at our clinic.”

Dental Office Receptionist

The Office Receptionist books patient appointments, does the bookkeeping and accounting, orders supplies, and has many other office duties to make sure the business runs smoothly.

“I am so glad to have experienced staff,” says Sean. “It was quite a transition to take over the practice, but the staff make it much easier to operate the business on a daily basis.”

Opportunities in dentistry

There are currently 81 Dentists licensed on PEI. “In general, Canada offers good opportunities in dentistry, except for big cities,” says Sean. “The bigger the centre, the more saturated it is with dentists.”

“Many Dalhousie graduates tend to want to remain in Halifax, but the opportunities are limited there. There are good opportunities in the rest of Atlantic Canada. I know of several PEI dentists looking to hire associate graduates right now.

“There are currently more male dentists on the Island. However, this will change over the next number of years, as there are now more female than male dental students graduating each year.”

For more about the **Dental Association of PEI**, visit www.dapei.ca

To explore Dentistry and other occupations in the field, visit the **PEI Healthcare Career Booklet** at www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/2014_healthcareers_en_low.pdf



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