

Up close and personal

Dentistry magazine caught up with cosmetic dental surgeon Bob Khanna to ask about his career and his thoughts on the future of facial aesthetics



How did you get to where you are today?

After completing my A-levels in 1988, I enrolled as an undergraduate in dentistry at Cardiff. I qualified in December 1992 and, after one year VT, went straight into private practice in Ascot. I've spent the last 14 years furthering my interest and skills in cosmetic and implant surgical dentistry, attending post-graduate programmes in the UK and the USA predominantly.

I was introduced to non-surgical facial aesthetics (Botox and dermal fillers) in 1997 while in Canada on an implant training programme. In the same year I was appointed Clinical Dental Director for Intergrated Dental Holdings. I set up my UK Training Institute from humble beginnings in 1999, where I trained dentists in Botox and dermal fillers. Today the Dr Bob Khanna Training Institute attracts dentists, doctors and plastic surgeons from all over the world.

In 2003 I was awarded with a Fellowship to the highly acclaimed International Academy for Dental Facial Aesthetics, and a year later set up private clinics in Harley Street and Manchester. In 2005 I created a non-profit organisation, The International Academy of Advanced Facial Aesthetics (IAAFA), which boasts over 270 members to date.

When did you first decide to become a dentist?

I was destined to become a doctor from birth (Indian parents!). However, during my teens medical doctors were severely overworked and underpaid and I also wanted a career in which I could express my artistic skills, hence dentistry seemed to fit the bill!

What has been the most memorable moment in your career/life?

Career: There have been so

many great moments, strangely enough getting my A-Level results (2 As and 1 B) was special because I truly believe it was the toughest challenge to overcome at that tender age and level of maturity. Also, the significance was overwhelming as it guaranteed me a place at my chosen dental school to start my chosen career on time! Apart from obviously qualifying as a dentist, I was deeply honoured to be awarded in 2003 with a Fellowship to the International Academy for Dental Facial Aesthetics in New York.

Life: If life's not about each breath you take, but about the moments that take your breath away, then my most memorable moment has to be helping deliver my first-born child, Parris, in 2000. That certainly took my breath away – and believe me the two guys that followed have continued in the quest to make me breathless!

What have been the biggest barriers in your career/life?

Getting the work/life balance right is always a tough challenge. If one wants it all (i.e. a family and a successful career) there is no question that compromises need to be made with career progression for fear of being an absentee parent or husband.

What do you like/dislike most about your job?

Thinking of dislikes reminds me of a funny quote 'Dentistry would be fine if it wasn't for the patient!' The nature of our profession makes us 'givers' and when you aim to deliver 120% to your patients, you have zero tolerance for moaners and groaners. The best thing about private practice is that it is easier to get rid of patients you don't want to treat and entertain patients who respect your level of commitment and sincerity. Oh, and I don't like administrative paperwork at all.

As for likes, freedom and hours of work and the fact that we can choose to focus on a particular type of dentistry that interests us.

What have you learnt most about people as a dentist?

Of course it's flattering, but I've found that people tend to respect honesty and sincerity, which are invaluable attributes to have as a clinician. Also, no matter how wealthy a patient is, they always like a good bargain!

If you hadn't been a dentist, what would you have been and why?

An artist. I loved it at school and even now enjoy sketching (when I get the time). Or an actor/comedian – there's no question that I thoroughly enjoy putting on a show and nothing gives me greater pleasure than making people laugh.

What would you change about the dental profession if you could?

Education in facial aesthetics at a basic level as a part of the undergraduate curriculum within dentistry. I would also restrict NHS services to the really underprivileged section of society.

What do you think of dentistry in the UK compared to the States?

Actually, in many ways it is better, such as within cosmetic dentistry the European, toned down, individualised smile rehabilitations are more attractive compared to the typical 'cloned' snow white USA varieties. However, in general there is no question that in many ways American dentists have the confidence to be more innovative than their UK counterparts.

What are the three things you wish you'd known about running a business before you opened yours?

1. Understanding the importance of getting quality financial advice.
2. Appreciating the amount of paperwork involved.

3. The organisational skills required and the art of delegation – our controlling nature can be counterproductive!

What is it like being a high-profile dentist?

Of course it's flattering, but there is an enormous amount of responsibility associated as invariably one becomes a mentor/role model for so many dentists and colleagues. I suppose on reflection anybody who attains a high-profile status in what they do becomes even keener to improve themselves.

What advice would you give to anyone entering the dental profession now?

Dentistry has never been more exciting. I would encourage newly qualified dentists to invest time and commitment to post-graduate education in implantology, cosmetic dentistry and of course facial aesthetics. The role and scope of a dental surgeon today is much more diverse and the newly qualified dentist has a perfect foundation on which to build their skills.

How do you see the future of dentistry progressing?

In short, dentists will no longer be just 'tooth doctors'. Of course the basic skills and knowledge to become a dentist are a foundation on which to build and venture into more advanced areas, such as implantology, cosmetic dentistry and facial aesthetics.

I had a vision 10 years ago of the evolution of 'tooth doctors' into what I have described as **facial dental surgeons**. This is now becoming a reality as over 25% of all UK dentists have seen the light and progressed. I predict that within another 10 years most dental practices will be offering facial aesthetics to their patients.

What in your view is the secret of success?

Three words – confidence (in one's abilities), dedication (to the task in hand) and passion (for life itself). ■

Bob Khanna – personal factfile

Tell us about your upbringing and family?

Born in 1970 and raised in Taplow, Berkshire. Married to Sonia and we have three boys; Parris (6), Kamran (4) and Aryan (1).

Where do you live now and describe your house?

Just outside Ascot in a seven-bedroom modern house set in two acres of woodland.

What did your parents do?

Business background but they were definitely keen for me to pursue a medical career and were delighted when I decided on dentistry as opposed to medicine as all the dentists drove better cars and had larger houses! My mother's tenacity has played a huge part in influencing me to become a success. Failure was not an option in her books!

What are the best and worst traits of your character?

Best: I'm my worst critic so I'm never really content with my work and am always seeking perfection which I see as a real positive. Worst: I don't like to be around miserable people and I expect everyone to be in a good mood all the time, which is of course totally illogical and unreasonable!

What do you admire most/not admire in people?

Admire: Fearless confidence with the right balance of arrogance and a sense of humour.

Not admire: I have a problem with people who 'sponge' off society and are consumed by self-pity and do not even attempt to remedy their situation.

What do you do in your spare time?

Keeping in good shape and being fit is high up on my priority list. I have a black belt in kick-boxing but am currently active in mixed martial arts and particularly interested in Keysi fighting (martial arts designed for the modern street).

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?

South Beach, Miami.

Favourite food?

Thai cuisine, closely followed by Italian.

Favourite drink?

With food, it has to be a good, strong, robust red wine such as a Barolo from Piemonte, otherwise I must admit I love a well made Mojito!

Favourite book?

To date probably *The Da Vinci Code* by Dan Brown but I must admit I would rather spend my spare time engaged in sport than read a book.

Favourite film?

Here's my top five in no particular order: *Goodfellas*, *Scarface*, *Schindler's List*, *Sixth Sense* and *There's Something about Mary*.

Favourite album?

Top three in no particular order: *Ladies and Gentleman – the best of George Michael*, 50 Cent – *Get Rich or Die Tryin'*, Andrea Bocelli – *Romanza*.

Life ambition?

To earn more money than my wife can spend on clothes, handbags, shoes and jewellery (i.e. an impossible task!). Seriously, my ambition would be for all of my boys to be happy, healthy and more successful than their dad.

independent seminars

Bob Khanna will be appearing at the **World Aesthetic Congress 2007** in June. To book your tickets call 0800 371 652, email seminars@fmc.co.uk or visit www.independentseminars.com/wac

World Aesthetic Congress 2007

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