



In the last 5 years, I have been fortunate enough to have worked in a variety of environments, in unique clinics in the UK and abroad (Singapore), and in both primary (Private and NHS associate) and NHS secondary care (Guy's Hospital, London, and the Charles Clifford Hospital, Sheffield).

The critical factor to delivering excellent care was not whether it was public or private. It was not about how fancy the chairs were, or how many types of Nespresso pods they provided the patients. It was not even the years of experience of the clinicians. The number one factor I witnessed, or actually felt, was the culture of the organisation.

The culture can be different between organisations, but it can vary widely even within an organisation. I noticed this when certain departments or certain floors of a hospital had a different culture to the other departments.

I think everyone can grasp this point - as we have all probably worked in or experienced both toxic cultures and thriving cultures.

I am no expert in this area, only just a reflective observer. I think 3 things define a great culture:

Cohesiveness - does everyone have each other's back? Will the nurses work through lunch and not moan, but instead feel part of a bigger cause, and grateful to have helped a patient? Are the other colleagues working harder to ease the workload on the late colleague? Is the effort forced, or genuine? What is the chemistry like between all the wider dental team? Can everyone be themselves and trust one another?

Coherence - If the practice voicemail and marketing claim that you are a centre of excellence, is that reflected in your materials, training and equipment? Are you really striving for excellence, or are you cutting corners? Does everyone have the attitude that oozes excellence?

Purpose - if everyone has the same purpose, the same vision, and the same 'why?', then wonderful things will happen. This is perfectly summed up by the words of Simon Sinek, 'people don't buy what you do, they buy why you do it'.

Ultimately, if your dental practice is surrounded by people who genuinely care about each other and the patients, and everyone adopts a winning attitude, then you are in the right place.



I feel incredibly fortunate to work in excellent clinics with thriving cultures. My advice to any young Dentists who are working within a toxic culture is to take control of the situation and plan an exit strategy, or to do everything in your power to positively influence your environment.

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