

How we manage

Asif Chatoo and **Didier Fillion** of the London Lingual Orthodontic Clinic tell Caroline Holland about their entente cordiale



Asif Chatoo and Didier Fillion, partners at the London Lingual Orthodontic Clinic

Anglo-French relations are notable for their unpredictability. While there can sometimes be an 'entente cordiale' between the Brits and the French, at other times the entente can be less than cordial, even frosty. But not when it comes to orthodontics. And not when it comes to two leading exponents, Asif Chatoo and Didier Fillion, who are in the same practice in Wimpole Street.

Their credentials are enviable. Asif is currently the only UK orthodontist accredited by both the European and the World Society of Lingual Orthodontics. Didier's practice has been dedicated to lingual orthodontics since 1987 and he is currently president of the World Society of Lingual Orthodontics.

Both have contributed enormously to the change in attitude towards lingual orthodontics currently taking place in the UK and their respect for each other is evident.

New beginnings

Asif opened the London Lingual Orthodontic Clinic (LLOC) five years ago as the UK's first practice dedicated to lingual techniques. He had already established a reputation working at one of the UK's best-known practices, Senova in Watford and in the City of London.

Didier Fillion had been dividing his time between London and Paris since 1997 but by 2005, when Asif was planning to establish LLOC, Didier was looking for a partner in the UK.

So why did he approach Asif? At the time, he explains, Asif was one of the delegates on his yearlong course, learning about the lingual technique. Didier continues: 'He is a quiet man, smart and quiet and very intelligent in lingual techniques.' For Didier's part, he too is quiet and passionate about what he does.

On both a personal and practical level, they are a natural fit, which is critical when you share a surgery and a dental nurse.

If there are any challenges, they are encountered by Farah Anad, their nurse, whose style of dental nursing must vary according to which specialist is in the surgery. While Asif practises four-handed dentistry, Didier doesn't. Around 20% of his London patients are French and at those appointments, Farah cannot understand the conversations.

But both depend on her and their differing expectations keep life interesting.

Differing styles

Didier arrives by Eurostar every Monday morning and leaves Tuesday evening either to work in Paris or to teach at one of several universities around the world. Asif is in the practice on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Despite the differing approach to their clinical practice, with differing appointment lengths and styles of working, they both have a disciplined approach to practice protocols. Farah manages much of the surgery administration, sending off the lab work to either a laboratory in London – for impressions – or the Continent for the custom-made appliances. She also makes sure the work is back in time for the patient's next appointment.

Asif and Didier are seldom in the practice at the same time but because they understand each other and have much in common, their relationship works well. For instance, they both:

- Teach lingual orthodontics – Asif on the University of Warwick's Masters programme and Didier is a course director the University of Paris
- Are innovators. Didier has helped invent a new lingual technique, the Orapix, and Asif participates in trials of products and materials

- Support colleagues and their technique through the British Lingual Orthodontic Society – Didier was the first chairman and now president, Asif has been secretary and they were both founder members.

The fundamental difference between them is the age gap and resulting difference in the number of years dedicated to the lingual technique. Didier was providing the treatment throughout the late 1980s and 1990s and even set up his own laboratory in Paris so he could influence the design and shape of brackets. He is probably the only specialist in the world with a continuing unbroken record of running a practice dedicated to lingual. 'It was completely crazy,' he says, 'but I am very fond of aesthetics and to give someone a nice smile without an ugly appliance, I could not resist the attraction of it.'

He remembers the day in 1982 when he read an article in an American journal about lingual orthodontics and decided this was for him. He sold his practice in Saumur in the Loire Valley and moved to Paris. While most other orthodontists of Didier's generation gave up the lingual technique due to the challenges of the systems available in the 1980s and 1990s, he remained an evangelist.

Asif has also become an evangelist for the cause. Today the brackets are smaller, straight wires are possible and the appliance is easier for patients to wear and to tolerate.

By having the foresight to choose the name London Lingual Orthodontic Clinic, Asif has ensured he and Didier have a regular flow of patients who find the practice through their website. Word of mouth recommendations also bring in new patients.

Celebrity status

They have treated many famous names, the best known happy for their association with LLOC to be made public are actresses Kelly Brook and Sadie Frost and newsreader Martin Popplewell.

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The trail of celebrities to their doors has helped immeasurably with the branding and promotion of the practice. Unbeknownst to them, some satisfied patients turn out to be journalists who subsequently write about their treatment in the columns of magazines and national newspapers.

Being a pilot practice for new technologies also helps them stay in the news and they have a loyal referral base among dentist colleagues.

As Didier prepares to start writing his book on lingual orthodontics and Asif plans to devote yet more of his time to expanding LLOC, the entente cordiale in Wimpole Street is warm indeed. PD



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