

# How I got into Orthopaedics

Simon Fleming



## Foreword

It was during the British Orthopaedic Trainees Association (BOTA) meeting at the British Orthopaedic Association Congress (2014) that *How I Got Into Orthopaedics* was born. A discussion had begun about the recruitment crisis in surgery, from core all the way to Trauma and Orthopaedics (T&O) higher surgical training. It was motivated by a realization, supported by a lot of depressing graphs, editorials and competition ratios, that demonstrated that fewer and fewer people want to be surgeons and this is being reflected in core surgical trainee recruitment and retention. A conversation began on trying to identify what it was that enthused members of the BOTA committee to become Trauma and Orthopaedic surgeons. What had inspired us; what had made us choose this life over others? The ramifications of this recruitment and retention issue are being seen across the surgical spectrum and it was this issue we felt a deep need to do something about.

It was then that Mustafa Rashid, then BOTA Vice President, now President, came up with the solution. He recognized that during our conversations, there were some common themes, such as inspirational mentors, non-linear career paths, personal focus and the like. He also recognized that there were some very individual, very personal aspects to all of our stories – and so *How I Got Into Orthopaedics* began; his idea, a project to compile a collection of tales of how each one of us had ended up where we were and, more importantly, who had inspired and motivated us along the way.

It was therefore a huge honour when I was allocated the envious task of collating these sagas into something that, hopefully, might inspire others to follow us into a career we love. When asked, I expected a lot of “I’ve always been a ‘pod’”. I’m self motivated and I cracked on and look how awesome I am and me, me, me...” I was so pleased to find out how wrong I was.

Each person who was kind and honest enough to share their personal journey has walked an individual path. They have all overcome their own challenges and setbacks. No one person’s

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story is quite the same and hopefully, for those who have yet to choose their future career, one will ring true.

Without the contributors’ open and passionate narratives, we would not have this amazing body of work and for that, I am especially grateful. For those of us who are already in T&O, whether trainee or not, I hope that some of these stories will remind you of what you went through, all the help and nurturing you received and maybe, just maybe, will encourage you to go that extra mile to share just a fraction of your love for T&O with your juniors, whether student, foundation or core.

More importantly, for those of you who are not yet surgical or T&O trainees, I hope that you read these and think that maybe, just maybe, if we can do it...so can you.

I hope you enjoy reading this as much as I enjoyed putting this together. ◆

## How I got into orthopaedics — Sara Dorman: My story

Sara Dorman



It’s difficult to remember a defining moment when I decided I wanted to be an Orthopod. In fact, throughout my school years, I was adamant I wanted to be an English teacher. My A-levels weren’t exactly geared for medicine, with English, Home Economics, Chemistry and Biology. However in my final school year, despite discouraging advice from my parents and mentors, I applied for medicine.

It became quite clear to me, early on, that I was destined for a career in a practical speciality, probably due to my impatient nature and the need to see results quickly (probably a good job I decided against teaching!).

I decided that I was going to pursue surgery and that doing a BSc in Anatomy and Forensic Anthropology would probably be a good move. During this year, I was taught by an eccentric American anatomy professor who had the most fantastic way of describing anatomy. I got hands-on cadaveric experience at dissection, taught by surgeons, and through forensic anthropology learnt about trauma, disaster surgery, skeletal pathology and non-accidental injuries.

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