

From dentistry to medical entrepreneurship: Dr Periwinkle Kaur, Director of ESU Medical Solutions

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“Hi everyone! I'm Periwinkle Kaur, you can call me Peri. Dentist by profession, I now lead ESU Medical Solutions, a company specialising in medical and veterinary equipment and surgical supplies.

“If I am not in my office, you can find me playing lawn tennis or exploring some great locations and countryside farms. We're fortunate to be in the beautiful Southwest, and I enjoy long drives through Devon and Somerset, visiting charming local villages, sampling fresh produce, and of course appreciating the local cider!

“I am the Co-founder and Director of ESU Medical; we are based in Taunton, Somerset and have successfully achieved global reach.

“My company is dedicated to serving private hospitals, veterinary practices and universities across Somerset and the rest of the UK and the world including six continents. We pride ourselves on being an independent company that offers an 'all-in-one' solution for hospitals, clinics and independent practices, no matter the make or model of the surgical devices.”

What inspired you to transition from a practising dentist to leading a business that supplies surgical equipment and hospital materials?

“During my journey through dental school in India, I developed a deep fascination with the technology and functionality of medical and surgical equipment, alongside my studies in dental and medical subjects. While I initially pursued dentistry, this interest, along with

my interest in healthcare management, persisted and grew stronger over time. What ultimately inspired me to transition from practising dentistry to leading a business that supplies surgical equipment and hospital supplies was my passion for making a meaningful impact in healthcare. I saw an opportunity to enhance the tools and equipment that healthcare professionals depend on daily, aiming to elevate the standard of care. The challenge of running a business and the opportunity to innovate within the industry were irresistibly exciting to me.”

Can you share some key challenges and opportunities you faced during this career shift?

“Transitioning from dentistry to leading a business in medical devices and surgical equipment presented several challenges and opportunities. Key challenges included adapting to a new industry with different regulatory requirements and learning curves in marketing, product development, and supply chain management. However, these challenges also brought opportunities to innovate and improve existing practices, in terms of product range and supply chain. An opportunity I still very much enjoy is building relationships with suppliers and healthcare professionals, which continues to provide invaluable insights and collaborations that fuel our growth and impact as a business!”

Skills and knowledge:

How did your background in dentistry prepare you for the business side of medical supplies?

“My background in dentistry provided a strong foundation for transitioning to the business side of medical supplies. As a dentist, I developed a keen eye for detail, precision and quality—traits that are crucial when evaluating medical and surgical equipment. My clinical experience gave me a deep understanding of the practical needs and challenges faced by healthcare professionals, enabling me to search for, select and help develop products that truly meet their demands. Dentistry honed my skills in patient communication, time management and other transferrable skills, all of which have been invaluable in managing and growing the business.”

What additional skills did you have to develop to succeed in this new role?

“A key step I took towards achieving my goals was pursuing a Master's degree at the University of Northampton and likewise doing market research. I learned about consumer behaviour, supply chain management and key industry stakeholders, which I later implemented specifically in the healthcare industry. These skills have been crucial in navigating the complexities of this new role and driving the company's success. I also completed CMI (Chartered Management Institute) accreditation to assure my outgoing skills are polished well.”

Business insights:

What are some current trends in the medical and veterinary equipment supply industry that you find particularly exciting or concerning?

"One exciting trend in the medical and veterinary equipment supply industry is the rise of telemedicine and remote monitoring technologies, which are enhancing patient care and accessibility. Additionally, advancements in AI and machine learning are improving diagnostic tools and treatment options. However, a concerning trend is the increasing prevalence of supply chain disruptions, which can affect the timely delivery of essential equipment. I believe that balancing innovation with reliability in supply chains is crucial for the industry's future."

Can you describe the process of developing and bringing a new product to market?

"Well, this is an area that I wish to pursue further as the business grows. Bringing a new product to market involves several key steps. First, we conduct thorough market research to identify needs and gaps. Next, we work on product design and development. Within the medical industry, key players such as Styrker, Karl Storz, Ethicon and Medtronic predominantly to ensure that their products meet the regulatory standards. I work with R&D teams and the team completes the prototyping and engages in rigorous testing following which we gather feedback from healthcare professionals, our customers. Once refined, we feedback to our suppliers who will then proceed with manufacturing, followed by marketing and distribution – which I personally oversee. Continuous monitoring and support post-launch ensure the product meets expectations and can be improved over time. An example is our very own ESU adapters."

Business operations and customer relations:

How do you maintain relationships with veterinary and equine centres, and hospitals globally?

"Maintaining relationships with veterinary and equine centres and hospitals globally involves consistent communication, offering professional development support and fostering partnerships. I keep them engaged with regular updates, workshops and personalised support. Collaborating on research, as well as leveraging technology for telemedicine, strengthens our connections. Participating in industry events and providing customised solutions further enhance these relationships. I enjoy attending conferences and trade shows like FIME in the States, Arab Health in UAE and BVA in the UK. I also prioritise regular feedback and maintain high standards of quality to ensure ongoing improvement and satisfaction. I established a remote consultancy programme as part of the company during the pandemic, which remains active. This programme was designed to enable surgeons to offer immediate solutions wherever possible for elective surgery equipment issues. Additionally, I conduct on-site visits across the UK and EU to provide training, equipment setup and servicing."

Can you share any anecdotes about how your products have made a significant difference in a clinical setting?

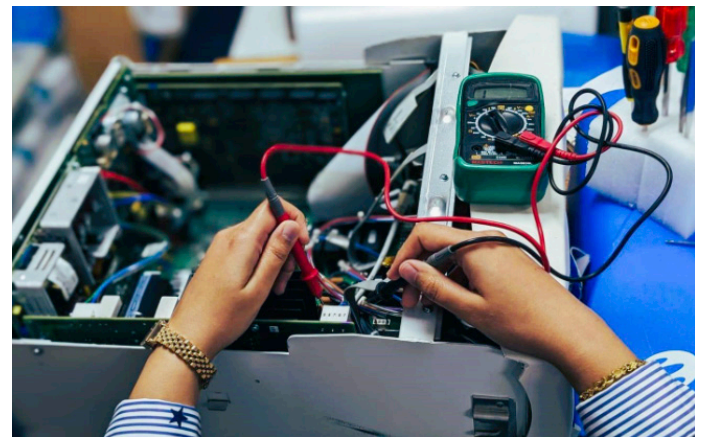


"ESU Medical's efforts/contribution in medical aid to Ukraine: My company has been actively contributing to medical aid efforts in Ukraine by providing surgical supplies, accessories and equipment through a channel network. We ensured movement of goods when none of the logistical companies delivered goods to Ukraine. We streamlined and coordinated donations of medical and surgical items to support frontline healthcare workers and facilities. I, along with one of my colleagues who is from Ukraine, worked indirectly with a team of doctors at district hospital to supply surgical equipment they needed by God's grace and will. Though our efforts are small, they are ongoing, and we hope to improve care for those affected by the crisis."

Challenges and opportunities/innovation and technology:

How has the global market for medical supplies changed in the past decade and where do you see it heading?

"Looking ahead, I see the market continuing to evolve with a greater focus on sustainability and eco-friendly products. The integration of artificial intelligence and machine learning into medical devices will likely become more prevalent, enhancing diagnostics and treatment options. Additionally, as the world recovers from recent supply chain disruptions -due to various reasons, there will be a push towards more resilient and localised supply chains to ensure the reliable availability of critical medical supplies."



Advice for students:

What advice would you give to students in medical, dental and veterinary fields who are interested in entrepreneurship?

"For students in medical, dental and veterinary fields interested in entrepreneurship, my advice is to first trust themselves and keep faith in the Almighty, following which one should gain a deep understanding of field through hands-on experience. Identify gaps and unmet needs in the industry, and don't be afraid to approach people and discuss ideas which can pave a path to innovation. Continuously educate yourself on business fundamentals, network with industry professionals, and seek mentorship. Embrace challenges as learning opportunities, stay adaptable, and remain passionate about improving patient care through your entrepreneurial endeavours. Lose anything but confidence to do something."

What skills or experiences should they focus on to prepare for a potential career in the business side of healthcare?

"To excel in healthcare business, students should focus on 'what to do and how to do' without ignoring the emotional intelligence. Clinical experience, curiosity to know about different things alongside the education in healthcare management, finance, marketing and supply chain logistics help one become confident. Attending conferences and trade shows to explore the market establishes strong network and makes one aware of the regulatory compliance. Nevertheless, stay updated on healthcare technology, and hone problem-solving

abilities. This blend of skills will set you up for success. There will always be someone who will not trust your abilities, never let that person be you."

Future goals:

What are your long-term goals for your business and how do you plan to achieve them?

"My long-term goals are to make a greater impact in the overall healthcare industry which includes medical and veterinary to bridge the gap within this sector that exists in many parts of the world. I envision establishing partnerships with industry leaders and suppliers, and expanding our product range and services for our customers including veterinary industry, which is often deprived of technical support. Nevertheless, I intend to involve professionals and new talent to work on creative projects that could lead to continuous product innovations.

"My aim is to make healthcare more accessible and more affordable for every living by providing innovative products and solutions and through partnership with organisations."

Would you ever consider returning to dental practise and clinical work?

"My focus and passion are now fully dedicated to growing and innovating the medical, dental and veterinary industry therefore I will not consider practising dentistry, rather I would like to work closely with dentists and other healthcare professionals. I found my calling in the medical device industry, so I am inclined to enhancing the product range in the sector including dentistry."

Leadership and management:

How would you describe your leadership style and how has it evolved over time?

"I portray myself as a Transformational Leader as I believe I have emotional intelligence and resourcefulness. I've got a great team behind me, so leadership has been relatively smooth. I naturally tend to follow the collaborative and adaptive leadership style. Initially, I focused on leading by example and providing clear direction as Co-founder. Over time, I've evolved to prioritise empowering my team, fostering open communication and encouraging brainstorming of ideas for growth. This approach has helped build a strong, motivated team and adapt to new challenges effectively."

Personal insights concluding thoughts/remarks:

"I personally believe that one should follow his/her passion so every day's work does not feel like a job and one should feel grateful to the Almighty for each new day."

What do you find most rewarding about your current role compared to practising dentistry?

"The most rewarding aspect of my current role is the ability to drive broader impact through innovation in medical and veterinary equipment. Unlike practising dentistry, where the impact is often limited to individual patients, my current role allows me to influence and improve the tools and services used by healthcare professionals on a larger scale. Seeing how our solutions enhance patient care and streamline operations across the industry is incredibly fulfilling."

"I'd like to extend a big thank you to the Inspire Student Health Sciences Research Journal for the opportunity to be interviewed. Special thanks to Dilshan for the engaging discussion about my transition from dentistry and my journey with ESU Medical. I hope my experiences are both helpful and inspiring to your readers. Wishing you all the best in your future careers, and I encourage you to explore opportunities beyond traditional fields like medicine, dentistry, or

veterinary science—consider the exciting realm of business! Feel free to reach out if you'd like to know more."

www.esumedical.co.uk

Photos kindly provided by Dr Kaur.