

# DermaDental: setting the gold standard in facial aesthetics

## Danielle Meagher speaks with Nicola Kramer about her life and DermaDental, Ireland's first combined dental and facial aesthetics clinic

*NK: What is your philosophy?*  
DM: In work my philosophy is pain-free... pain-free... pain-free dentistry and facial aesthetics. We have even developed the DermaDentalGentle dental freeze technique, which ensures that every single dental injection given at a DermaDental clinic is optimising all best practice

techniques to minimise discomfort during dental and facial aesthetic injections.

My own life philosophy is more a way of life than a philosophy; during the week I work really hard, stay focused and never ever take the eye of the ball. I have a tough workout regime also, as I believe that if you want to win across the board at everything (which I do!) then you need to be mentally and physically fit; and I'm not talking about 30 minutes on the cross trainer. Monday, Wednesday and Friday I run 5k at 8am followed by an hour of personal training, plus I do three advanced spin classes a week. I've always enjoyed sport and I'm very competitive.

*NK: Who was your biggest influence, and why?*

DM: The Oral Maxillofacial Department at Dublin Dental

School/Trinity College Dublin was without a doubt a huge influence in my dental career. Even as a trainee dentist it was fairly obvious that I had a real interest in this area, and this, I would say, is the main reason I have trained in facial aesthetics. I personally would find surgery/disease and anatomy of the head and neck far more interesting than a first stage endo any day of the week. Indeed, my favourite sessions when I was a trainee dentist were Oral Medicine with Professor Flint and Oral Surgery with Mr Ryan and Professor Stassen.

Dr Mary Collins and Dr Mary Clarke are also two phenomenal surgeons that I trained under, and they are women in a man's world who hold their own every single time hands down, and so they too were an inspiration.

It seems to be a trait within the Oral Maxillofacial

Department at Trinity; all these people are hugely qualified, and yet they are so wonderful to train under because they always make time for you, just as they do for their patients. There is no arrogance, they are simply brilliant at what they do and brilliant with their patients.

*NK: What prompted your move to incorporate facial aesthetics into the dental practice?*

DM: As mentioned before, I was really interested in oral medicine and oral surgery. My knowledge of head and neck anatomy, as well as diseases of the head and neck, is pretty good due to the brilliant people I trained under.

I am strong in these areas and I personally wanted to move into the area of facial aesthetics because I was really interested in it.

I also believe that the use of dental block is key to pain-

free lip and dermal filler. Many doctors use EMLA cream for lip enhancement and dermal filler – that is fine if you don't mind inflicting huge pain and discomfort on your patients! The only way to do lip enhancement or nasolabial dermal filler is with dental block and so it makes sense to incorporate facial aesthetics into a dental clinic. At DermaDental we always have a resident dentist on hand to give a little DermaDentalGentle dental block to ensure pain-free facial aesthetic treatments.

**NK:** Do you get any facial aesthetic treatments yourself?

**DM:** When I started my facial aesthetics training at Harley Street, London, I didn't think I would ever get any Botox because I am the biggest chicken ever, and the reason I am such a gentle operator is because I don't tolerate pain myself. After the first day I soon realised that Botox doesn't hurt one bit. I now get Botox every six months myself. I've also had dermal filler in the nasolabial lines on my face. I would love to get my top lip done but currently in Ireland there is nobody doing lip filler as well as I do. I'm not just talking about getting an excellent appearance, but I am talking about 100% pain-free lip enhancement, and so I will probably wait until I am next in Harley Street and get the colleague I trained under there to do my lips for me.

**NK:** What has been your biggest challenge?

**DM:** Dental school was tricky enough for me. I have a First in Aeronautical Engineering from the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UMIST) but to be honest that was a walk in the park compared to dentistry. It's a very tough course. I am proud to be a Trinity graduate because, in my opinion, it is a really great dental school, although they expect so much of you all the time.

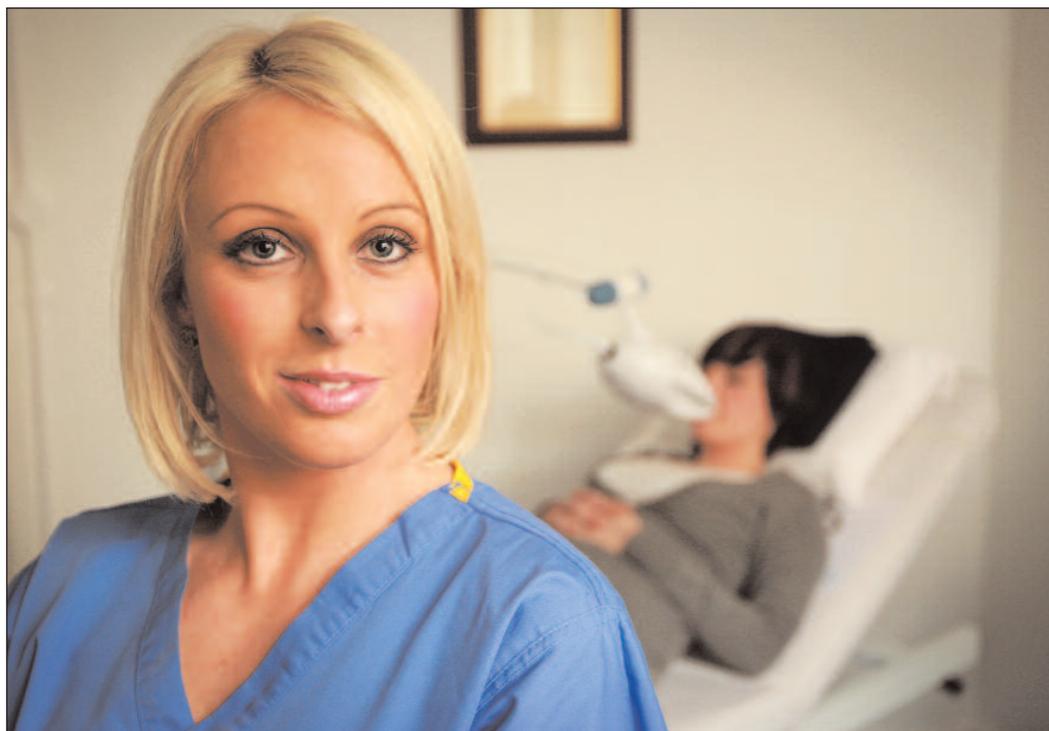


Image courtesy of Gerry Mooney, Sunday Independent

**Pictured here at her practice, DermaDental, Danielle's latest adventure is being appointed as an on-set adviser on RTE's drama series 'The Clinic'**

My route through dental school was difficult for a number of reasons: I was a mature student and I took a year out between the first and second years to have a little boy.

I remember the first two weeks back into the course after the year out; I would get off at lunchtime and cry for about an hour wondering how the hell I was going to get through four more years of this at the same time as looking after a little person all on my own. I thought it would get easier but it was a really hard slog every single day. In between my written and oral finals my son got chicken pox, and since my family are all hypochondriacs they stayed well away and I had to cope with all that single-handedly while doing my final exams.

So in essence I really don't owe anyone anything for where I am today. A real man (or woman) makes their own luck!

**NK:** What has been your biggest mistake?

**DM:** Initially I seriously considered bringing

DermaDental to the high street, and indeed I had a bid on a unit just off Grafton Street in Dublin before I realised that facial aesthetic clients/patients want discretion.

Also, with rent reviews going through the roof, and €200,000 key money to take over a lease in Dublin city centre with additional rent in excess of €150,000, I soon realised that while the figures would survive Grafton Street they were a lot less healthy than they would be if we moved away from the high street concept. So I nearly made a mistake in that. Grafton Street is fine if you have a big ego to satisfy and can cope with a small bank balance, I would always put aside any ego in favour of a healthier bank balance.

**NK:** What, if anything, would you do differently, given the chance?

**DM:** I wouldn't do a thing differently in work or in my life. I am proud of the journey I have been on, both professionally and personally. If you have it easy you don't appreciate things. I have

worked so hard to get to where I am today, against all the odds, and I do firmly believe that what doesn't break you makes you stronger.

**NK:** Professionally, what are you most proud of?

**DM:** When I was a dental student I won a European prize for dentistry, which was pretty cool. I then got invited to present my topic at a European conference, which was a great honour as an undergraduate.

I guess, though, that I am most proud of my unwavering drive and ambition; it is scary at times. I am also extremely proud of the DermaDental brand and the services we offer.

**NK:** How do you feel about the trend towards using 'high-tech' equipment such as digital imaging?

**DM:** If you want to play with the big boys/keep up with the big players in this industry, you absolutely need to have all the high-tech equipment.

Although sometimes you feel more than a pinch in your pocket because it is

pricey, it's definitely money well spent and allows you to offer the very best service to your patients.

*NK: What do you think is unique about your practice?*

DM: Everything! We are Ireland's first combined dental and facial aesthetics clinic, and we specialise in pain-free dentistry and facial aesthetic treatments.

Our new clinic is being designed by Ireland's top architectural interior design company, DesignFarm, with designer Brian McDonald leading the project. I am also using top property development company Complete Construction.

Brian is the designer behind The Beacon Hotel, and between himself and Luke Walshe (of Complete Construction) we are going to have a dental practice that looks more boutique hotel than the typical old-fashioned dentine-smelling dental clinic.

Our patients/clients will enjoy a premium service from a hand-picked collection of specialists in surroundings that are so glamorous they will forget they are at the dentist.

*NK: This is a young industry, but from what you have seen so far, are dentists receiving appropriate training before moving into this kind of practice? And if not, what should they be doing?*

DM: Dentists nor medical GPs nor plastic surgeons receive any training whatsoever for facial aesthetics in the course of their qualifications. We all attend the same facial aesthetic courses together, and are all eligible to go on these courses. However, it is a mistake to think that if you do the course you will be any good at facial aesthetics. The Botox is fairly routine, but the dermal filler and lip filler require a serious eye for perfection. I also think that male doctors don't have any great aptitude for producing the perfect pout – it's a girl thing!

*NK: What are your feelings about the future of aesthetic dentistry?*

DM: People are so conscious of their teeth today, even more so than five or 10 years ago. They want perfection, they want the American look. We do a huge amount of Zoom! advanced power teeth whitening at DermaDental and nobody asks for their teeth to be a 'bit whiter' – they are all asking for 'Hollywood white teeth'.

I believe the future of aesthetic dentistry in Ireland and the UK will move towards similar trends as seen in the US market. Whether that is a good thing I don't know, but it is what patients are looking for and we as dentists need to meet their expectations.

*NK: What is the most satisfying aspect of your daily work?*

DM: I love that new patients are at ease as soon as they meet me. Often they are very nervous, and I always greet them myself in the waiting room and answer any questions to alleviate any fears in advance. By the time they are finished with me, they are giving me a hug good-bye.

I am passionate about looking after patients and ensuring they have a pain-free experience at DermaDental every single time.

I also love that many people now attend me for lip filler, including patients who have had horrific lip filler experiences in the past where the operator used only EMLA cream (topical anaesthetic cream) before injecting lips; that is sadistic and completely unacceptable in this day and age. Also, although many nurses and doctors do offer dental block for lip filler, they often end up not successfully anaesthetising the area, and how could they? Us dentists spend five years learning to give dental block; it can't be learnt in a half-day course. I love that people remark that they 'felt absolutely nothing' when having lip filler treatment with me.

Mostly I just love all my

patients. They are all so nice and I think they like my down to earth 'less is more' attitude to facial aesthetics.

*NK: With the move to facial aesthetics, what system/staff changes did you have to make and why?*

DM: Obviously I invested a huge amount both financially and time-wise in my facial aesthetics training. There were huge changes to be made and the transition was indeed difficult, but we are there now and it is a huge achievement.

I won't miss all the red-eye flights to London Heathrow when I was commuting back and forth to Harley Street

during my facial aesthetics training. I thought those months of early morning flights on the weekend after already working a five-day week in general dentistry would never end!

*NK: Do you find the dental industry supports you well?*

DM: Actually I was surprised at how supportive my colleagues were. A lot of my colleagues now routinely refer any patients making Botox/dermal filler enquiries to me for consultation. I think they are all happy with the success we are having because they know I have worked really hard for it.

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I have just been made on-set adviser for RTE's drama series *The Clinic*, and they have all been saying well done. Also if I am featured in a magazine, or doing facial aesthetics on TV, I always get a lot of texts from my dentistry pals saying well done. I have a pretty down to earth attitude, and my practical 'less is more' attitude is pretty well-respected.

I also think colleagues realise we are setting gold standards in facial aesthetics at DermaDental and following protocol to a 'T'.

Many colleagues are also horrified at the thought of non-dentists giving dental block. Dental block is absolutely necessary when doing lip filler, and from speaking to my colleagues they are especially nervous of non-dentists giving lower block since there is a huge risk of parasthesia/anaesthesia in the lower third of the face from an inexperienced non-dentist doing dental injections.

NK: *What's next for you and your practice?*

DM: The next DermaDental clinic goes to shop fit 10 days from the date of this interview, so I guess I'll be tied up with the finer details of this for June and July. I have a team of seven people

working with me on this project: three dental clinic experts, a designer, a great builder and an audio/plasma TV guy.

We have everything planned, down to the light finishes, before we even take over a lease. We work so far in advance that we have a work schedule done before signing the lease. We also have all the dental chairs/equipment chosen, and we sign the contract for dental equipment pending lease, which means the chairs are ordered the day the lease is signed. As soon as we get the keys to a new clinic we move in like vultures to turn it around really quickly. This is the second one we are doing this year, and we will only get quicker and slicker at doing these fit-outs.

What is next for me personally is to brand and expand DermaDental and enjoy life with my little chap, because after all he is the reason I am doing all of this; his arrival into my life was the making of me. Currently, as I am doing this piece, I am on holiday in Portugal with my son. I would never cut into our time together with work-related stuff, but he is now asleep. It is 11pm and although I am technically meant to be on holiday, I am working away

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on this, as well as copy for the new website.

I guess I won't rest until I have achieved all that I have set out to do with DermaDental.

NK: *If you could offer one piece of advice to the readers of Irish*

*Dentist, what would it be?*

DM: Get a really great accountant who understands the dental profession. I use MedAccount. I couldn't have done any of this without my accountant's expertise and the support they have given us across the board. 

*Dr Danielle Meagher graduated in dentistry from Trinity College Dublin; she also holds an Honours degree in Aeronautical Engineering from UMIST, Manchester. Danielle is CEO, principal dentist and director of facial aesthetics at DermaDental, Ireland's first combined facial aesthetics and dental clinic. Danielle completed all of her training in facial aesthetics at Harley Street in London alongside other dentists, doctors and plastic surgeons.*

*Danielle believes that facial aesthetics is best done in a dental clinic, as many facial aesthetic treatments cannot be done without using dental block (unless you are okay with hurting your patients, which Danielle clearly isn't!) and dentists are the only people able to give a decent block, in her opinion. However, she also believes facial aesthetics is definitely not something every dentist/doctor is going to be good at; you either have it or you don't. Most people don't, but judging by Danielle's fast rising profile it's clear she does! Many of her clients/patients are very high profile Irish names.*

*In addition to having two degrees, Danielle won a European prize for dentistry as an undergraduate. During her fourth year of the dentistry degree she also completed her Sailing Yachtmaster's; she loves sailboats and has an Atlantic crossing under her belt (she sailed from Fort Lauderdale to Portsmouth, over 3,000 nautical miles, and over three weeks at sea) as part of a six-man crew.*

*Recently described in 'The Sunday Independent' as Ireland's celebrity dentist, she laughs and says 'My only mission in life is to ensure that DermaDental is a brand associated with pain-free dentistry and facial aesthetics'.*

*Danielle is 33 and lives just outside Dublin. She spends holidays in Portugal and in fact DermaDental's main charity is a boys' orphanage in Faro called Casa Dos Rapazes, which she visits when there. Currently DermaDental accepts second-hand clothes and nightwear that are washed and ironed and in excellent condition, as well as new clothes, for ages from five up to 18. Casa Dos Rapazes also need new boys' trainers (the boys love Nike/Addidas runners!). Danielle is also looking to raise money for day-to-day running, as well as couches, beanbags, bed lockers, pictures (the boys aged eight and upwards have no art on their walls), new bed linen and a bus for 60 boys to take them to Euro Disney!*

