

FEATURE



Throat Scope®: Lighting Throats Around the World

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Sitting at the Academy of Dental Management Consultants in Las Vegas a few years ago listening to the keynote speaker, I was struck by the simplicity of his words. Bill Rancic (Donald Trump's first apprentice) defined the difference between successful and unsuccessful people in business. Many people have great ideas but never execute them. They find 100 ways to get to the starting line but never cross over. His words resonated with everyone in the audience: "Successful people DO IT!"



Case in point: imagine yourself eight months pregnant trying to restrain your 15-month-old toddler who is struggling with a sore throat while the doctor attempts in vain to place a wooden tongue depressor inside your child's mouth and hold a bright light in the other hand. The child, now frantic and obviously in discomfort, is clinging close to mom. How does a traumatic experience

at the doctor's office give rise to an innovative idea that has gained global recognition? Meet Australian Jennifer Holland, a stay-at-home mom of four children and a former financial accountant. Her real-life experience in 2009 with her first child plunged her into action. It was an unpleasant experience, one that would affect all her children. "I thought surely there must be something else," she says. But there wasn't. The only option was a patented tongue depressor with a fibre optic cable running through the tongue blade, making it a very expensive and impractical alternative to the wooden tongue depressor.

One month later, she came up with the idea for Throat Scope®, the world's first all-in-one illuminated tongue depressor with a disposable blade for oral cavity examination. This product marked the beginning of Holland's journey into business. It was a long, arduous road. Holland's family poured their life savings initially into the design, trademark, patent, and development of Throat Scope®. There was a lot at stake particularly with such a young family at home. Then in 2015, Jennifer found herself in the Shark Tank, winning the endorsement of Australian Shark Steve Baxter. His endorsement and exposure





accelerated the business, facilitating its introduction into the consumer market. Fast forward to today, and this medical device is now available in over 146 countries. “Successful people DO IT!”

The “emotional” value of this brilliant invention was again reinforced a few years after its conception when Jennifer found herself in a medical crisis. Her youngest child experienced a severe reaction to peanut butter that required the hospital emergency team to hold her child down while they inspected her mouth with a wooden tongue depressor. This crisis once again demonstrated the need for a more child-friendly, effective assessment tool for a child who was in a distressing situation.

Thanks to the product’s initial success within the consumer market, Jennifer and her team went on to introduce Throat Scope® to the medical profession and then to the veterinary community. With the ability of Throat Scope® to illuminate a number of high-risk intraoral anatomical areas, it offers huge potential for oral assessments and oral cancer screening. I had the pleasure of meeting Jennifer in the US in June 2016. Jennifer immediately struck me as a dedicated mother and a woman passionate about making a difference in people’s lives. The device was introduced to the Oral Cancer Foundation and, in January 2017, Jennifer and the foundation jointly announced their partnership and mandate to have Throat Scope® used as a screening tool in all oral cancer screening clinics across the United States.

Because the Throat Scope® handle has a 200-hour lifespan, it can facilitate hundreds of oral cancer screenings. The disposable blades cost pennies per client. Throat Scope® offers the dental professional as well as parents an illuminated retraction tool with the ability to effectively depress the tongue and gain superior visual access to the posterior oral and oropharyngeal areas, the floor of the mouth, and the lateral borders of the tongue—all high-risk anatomical areas.

Throat Scope® will be found in pharmacies across the US in 2017; online ordering is also available at www.throatscope.com. Stay tuned...this device is only the beginning of a number of other wonderful inventions that will have an impact on health care around the world. “For me it has always been about believe, act, persist—believe in yourself and believe in your ability to achieve it,” Jennifer says.¹ “Successful people DO IT!”

Reference

1. Throat Scope®. How Throat Scope founder Jennifer Holland turned an idea into a multimillion dollar business and got it backed on Shark Tank [Internet]. Throat Scope News, 6 May 2016 [cited 2017 Feb 21]. Available from: www.throatscope.com/news/6th-may-2016---smart-company

Disclosure: Jo-Anne Jones works in the capacity of an advisor to Throat Scope®.

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