

“You could easily make the case that ongoing dental training is one of the most important things dentists do,” says Dr. Tarun Agarwal of Raleigh Dental Arts. He has a national and international reputation as a master of dental technology, and regularly trains dentists from around the country and beyond in the most effective methods for using amazing new tools.

“Upon leaving dental school, dentists have a limited set of knowledge, range of care, and capabilities.” Dr. Agarwal notes. “After you’ve run through what you learned in school you need to start expanding your training in order to better serve your patients. Dentistry schools do a good job of providing a rich range of fundamental knowledge, covering a broad range of topics, but then the individual dentist needs to find his or her own niche. If you try to be everything for everybody, it’s almost impossible to keep up with it all, and to be really proficient in multiple areas.”

For that reason, he says, “we all need to pick our professional paths. I’ve primarily concentrated on three areas: sleep apnea, dental implants, and cosmetic restorative cases. And at this stage in my professional life, that’s where I principally dedicate my energy for myself and for my practice.

“For a practice to continue growing, you need to add other dentists who can fill voids we want to offer. My associate, Dr. Nate Leedy, deals with frenectomy and general dentistry; and we’ve recently added Dr. Christian Nolten to our team, who is developing his own niche. Our focus is on the continuous growth of each individual practitioner, encouraging and supporting them to become the best at what they do.”

Dr. Agarwal observes that “another part of training that is sometimes overlooked, in both medical and dental practices, is training of the supporting team members. At the end of the day, the majority of the patients’ interactions are with support staff. Their training is vital to our practice and guarantees the best possible care for our patients.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Adds Dr. Agarwal, “I envision that in ten years or so I’ll have a multifaceted practice. Space is holding us back at this point in time. In a perfect world our practice would include other specialists—an oral surgeon, a periodontist, an orthodontist—so that our patients can benefit from the full line of dental expertise, as needed, right here at Raleigh Dental Arts. By having multiple dentists working together, we can leverage the amount of technology that we have. It’s getting more difficult for a solo dentist to be able to buy, maintain, and keep up with the amount of technology on the dental scene. Broadening our capabilities allows us to spread developmental costs; it also makes communication between dentists a good deal easier.

“In the future,” he continues, “I see the potential for primary medical care becoming a part of dentistry. As dentistry becomes more varied, we are increasingly concerned with the overall health of patients. Patients see dentists more often than they see their physicians, and that makes us an important



Dr. Agarwal conducts a training session on identifying and treating sleep apnea for 14 dentists from throughout the country.



Ram Agarwal, retired from his dental practice in India, is pleased, proud, amazed—and exhausted!—as he observes his son, Tarun, emerge as a major presence in national and international dental developments.

gateway for many. For example, we have seen a great number of patients with elevated blood pressure who we encourage to go see their physicians; CT scans sometimes reveal nasal sinus issues that need medical attention; and sleep issues are often revealed in dental exams.”

THE POWER OF ADVANCING TECHNOLOGY

Rapid technological advances are already reshaping the practice of dentistry and will continue to do so, Dr. Agarwal notes. “My dad is a dentist and he’s astonished at the changes in dentistry today. Dental implants weren’t available back when he practiced. If you lost teeth, you had dentures made. Today, we can give people teeth that stay in their mouth permanently, and we make them faster. Dentures were hand-made, while today everything is machine-made. I can take images of your teeth and duplicate them precisely in minutes. Ten years from now, were you to lose all your teeth, we could literally go back and re-create the same teeth from those images.

“One of the newest technologies that we have today is a digital impression machine that allows us to take an optical image of the patient’s teeth showing us any changes that have occurred over the year. If your gums recede, if you grind your teeth and wear them down, or if your teeth have rotated

a bit because they’ve become loose from gum disease, we can see exactly how much has occurred. Dentally, we’ve digitized the human being—we can take a 3D image of your face, jawbone, or teeth.”

THE LOVE OF TRAINING

“I love training more than anything else,” Dr. Agarwal admits with a smile. “One of my goals when I bought my building was to build a training center connected to my practice; it’s been a passion of mine since dental school. And, in 2012, we built the Raleigh Dental Arts training center upstairs—which attracts dentists and dental professionals from across the country and beyond.

“Being a trainer keeps me on my toes—I have to be constantly evolving, or my training will become dull and obsolete. Since I began practicing, I’ve always been on the cutting edge of technology, buying and implementing dental machinery from day one when there wasn’t any real training available. We were involved in the development phase and the beta testing of new products; we were also involved in their training programs, learning and practicing on ourselves, and then developing training protocols for other professionals across the country.

“Our first product was a CT machine, or Cone Beam, which has the ability to take three dimensional X-rays. There’s also a machine that takes digital impressions of teeth. Then came the CAD/CAM, which allows us to fabricate dental restorations in the office; within minutes the finished tooth

comes out! Today we have Invisalign—it’s the ability to move teeth without braces by digitally scanning the teeth and then producing custom-made aligners.”

But, he points out, “technology completely changes every five or so years and requires ongoing training. At Raleigh Dental Arts we need to be on the cutting edge of technology to best serve our patients, and to be able to provide training to others. I spend about 40 percent of my time training—holding classes on dental sleep apnea, implant dentistry, and CEREC, among other topics. Training always follows what we’re doing in the practice and as our practice expands to a new area, we introduce it in a training class. This allows us to add products and procedures to the practice as well.

“Quality matters greatly. And what we do, to a large extent, is find the right niche, that area that we’re passionate about; to make sure we get the latest and best training in the newest dental procedures and technology. At Raleigh Dental Arts we have the right providers and the latest tools to help our patients with all of their dental needs.” *llh*

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