

**F**OR DR. DANIEL DANIEL, THE DECISION to offer cosmetic dentistry in his practice was based on finding fulfillment in his career.

"It's a career where you have a positive impact on people's lives," says Dr. Daniel, a dentist in Halifax. "It's dealing with what people want and making them happy. That's much more rewarding than dealing with patients who are having anxiety."

Dr. Daniel pointed out the contrast between a reactive model of medicine, where patients are undergoing procedures such as root canals or extractions because of necessity, and a proactive model, where patients are seeking out improvements to their oral health and addressing esthetic concerns about their smile.

"We provide hospitality to our clients and treat them like good friends or members of the family," says Dr. Daniel.

Three key procedures that are part of a "smile makeover" include porcelain veneers (custom-made laminates that are bonded directly to the teeth), Invisalign (removable aligners that move teeth over time), and whitening, or using bleaching solutions to lighten discolored teeth, says Dr. Daniel. "Most patients usually want a combination of two or three of those [procedures]," he says.

Dr. Elliot Mechanic, a pioneer in cosmetic dentistry in Canada, practices in an area south of the island of Montreal called Ile des Soeurs. As one of the founders of the Canadian Academy of Esthetic Dentistry, Dr. Mechanic has been in the forefront of esthetic dentistry and has witnessed the changes in patient demands over time.

"It used to be that you were thought lucky that restorative implants could be put in place," explains Dr. Mechanic. "Now, the procedures are driven by esthetics. Dentists can no longer get away with saying, 'this is good enough.'"

Indeed, baby boomers are a demographic segment that is driving the demand for pearly white, flawless teeth, notes Dr. Edward Philips, a Toronto dentist whose practice is limited to aesthetic dentistry and who runs the Studio for Aesthetic Dentistry.

"They all had their primary dentistry done in the '50s and '60s, with lots of heavy duty, restorative fillings," says Dr. Philips, who is an instructor in continuing education courses at the University of Toronto and the University of Western Ontario in London. "They may now want all their silver fillings taken out and are requesting full mouth makeovers. It is like having a house for many years and doing work on it over a long period of time, and you find nothing matches."

Current technology allows adhesive restorations that restore strength to teeth. Before these types of restorations, good tooth structure generally had to be compromised to eliminate the cavity and attach fillings. The silver fillings of yesteryear can break down and leak. Replacing those fillings with tooth-colored fillings helps prevent decay and fractures.

## SOME WANT UPDATED SMILES

Younger patients also may look at their teeth, seeing the "wear and tear" on their teeth and want to update and invigorate their smile with cosmetic work. "It is similar to having one set



## Baby boomers are driving the demand for cosmetic dentistry, in their search for teeth that are almost better than perfect

by Louise Gagnon,  
Correspondent, Dental Chronicle

of tires for your car," Dr. Philips says. "They can't last forever."

There have been advances in areas such as implantology. Where once procedures like implants did not have a high degree of success when they were new to cosmetic dentistry, the track record with implants is now impressive, with virtually all implant procedures being successful, thanks in part to newer materials

Periodontics has become more precise as well, with the availability of lasers to refine gum surgery. Gums are more easily shaped and recontoured, notes Dr. Philips.

For Dr. Mike Hansford, a cosmetic dentist who places and restores implants in Kamloops, B.C., whitening is a high priority for his patients. "That appears to be something that is on everyone's mind," says Dr. Hansford. "If patients have silver fillings, they frequently would like to change them to white."

Dr. Hansford notes that implants represent an option that prevents cutting into neighboring teeth to make a bridge. Indeed, crowns supported by implants can look, feel, and perform like natural teeth, according to Dr. Hansford. Implants firmly anchor dentures, minimizing the discomfort and self-consciousness of dentures that fit poorly.

Porcelain veneers have become a popular option in dental esthetics. The veneers hide chips, cracks, stains, and can fill in gaps and change the size and shape of the teeth. They can also be matched to natural tooth colors.

Other innovations such as Chairside Economical Restoration of Esthetic Ceramics (CEREC) permit dentists to restore damaged teeth with ceramic fillings that have a natural appearance and are non-metallic. CEREC is computer-aided design and computer-aided manufacturing in dentistry (CAD/CAM). It allows the need for provisional fillings and facilitates production of inlays, onlays, partial crowns, veneers, and crowns made of ceramic for the anterior, premolar, and molar regions.

Additionally, inlays and onlays can effectively restore back teeth. The restorations fit between or over the cusps of teeth, and their use avoids the need for a full, traditional crown.

Newer composite resins are available that are conducive to dental composite resin bonding that can restore chipped or broken teeth, fill in gaps, and reshape or recolor a smile. Periodontally, gum recontouring is a popular



Dr. Daniel



Dr. Hansford



Dr. Mechanic



Dr. Bentley



Dr. Philips

treatment since well-contoured, pink gum tissue complements and frames the teeth the same way a manicured lawn highlights a lush floral garden. When gum tissue is red and swollen, and not symmetrical, it detracts from the overall appearance of the mouth.

Digital photography also facilitates the ability for a dentist to have a master plan for an individual patient and then allow the creation of a step-by-step approach to achieve that master plan. Patients have visual images of the current state of their teeth, can see the progress in a visit, and see the improvement when they witness the final images.

Dr. Carol Waldman, a Toronto dentist, takes advantages of technologies such as the

Diode laser and Erbium:Yag laser when working with hard tissues such as bone or soft tissues such as gums.

## COMMUNICATION IS KEY

"Communication can become a really big problem," says Dr. Waldman. "The specialist may be skilled, but there may be a breakdown in communication if the staff members at the specialist's office are not doing their job."

Dr. Waldman also sees the relationship between oral health and cosmetic dentistry. "Form follows function," she says. "If you put someone in good health, they will look better."

Still, other dentists see their position as team leader and coordinate a range of dental work across specialties.

"I prefer to utilize specialists and focus my continuing education on the restorative aspects of dentistry," says Dr. Lisa Bentley, a dentist in Mississauga, Ont. "I act as the quarterback between several specialists."

Dr. Bentley notes that patient lifestyles should be considered when making treatment choices, such as placing an implant in the mouth. "If a patient is a heavy smoker, there is a greater failure with placing an implant," she says. "You also have to consider if the patient is immunocompromised or if the patient has increased cavity rates [when placing implants]."

While an intervention such as wearing braces may not be a quick fix for patients, it may mean that a dentist does not need to cut healthy enamel if teeth are first straightened, explains Dr. Bentley. "If crowding is an issue, I choose to have an orthodontic consultation first," she says. "Some adults have never had orthodontic work or adults can have orthodontic relapse."

Common procedures like veneers are popular choices for patients who want to better define their bite, as well as deal with tetracycline stains. "If there are periodontal or endodontic concerns, they have to be addressed before cosmetic dentistry," says Dr. Bentley.

The popularity of makeover shows has contributed to a phenomenon where patients expect little downtime after a procedure and envision that a perfect smile can be achieved over a weekend.

"Extreme makeover shows have been detrimental to dentistry because people have unrealistic approaches," says Dr. Bentley. "They come in on a Friday and think they will have a different mouth on a Monday. Meanwhile, they have not been to a dentist in 15 years."

The wide selection of technologies, such as lasers for soft tissue repair and new materials for procedures like crowns and bridges, permits dentists like Dr. Bentley to perfect her execution.

Dr. Doug Galan, a Calgary dentist who offers many esthetic dentistry services, stresses detailed planning is instrumental to success in esthetic dentistry.

"You have to consider the patient's expectations and your ability to deliver on those expectations," he says.

Dr. Galan says that fellow dentists can incorporate esthetic dentistry into their practice by joining societies and organizations dedicated to esthetic dentistry, by attending conferences that teach esthetic dentistry procedures, and by doing studies on their own.

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