

Building Bridges Under Water

Greg Gallant is easy to like. He has a genuine manner and welcoming smile so its not a stretch to believe compliments he gets from staff and patients about his practice. We're sitting in his office early in the morning filling interview time while we wait for Barbara at the front desk to announce his next patient. Conversation is relaxed and it seems like our interview is going to be easy too. But when the talk turns to the practice of dentistry, Gallant shifts from easy going to focused analytic. Know more about him and the transition makes sense. As a young man he had planned on a career in both engineering and computer programming.

Ask about the high tech gear in the practice and you'll hear Gallant say he wants equipment to enhance his ability to be "ultra precise". He does all procedures with an 18-times power microscope. His loops were customized at the manufacturer to include a prism, eliminating bending to get better vision during procedures. "I don't know why all loops are not made this way," he said. "The practice of dentistry is physically demanding and neck strain seems to be a pretty common complaint for dentists. I was always interested in how the human body is put together, how it functions. So developing solutions (before I have problems in my own practice) interests me."

Experimenting is natural for someone who as a kid "loved to tinker—like making a clock turn on a radio" or who took apart mechanical devices and putting them back together again, some with adjustments he thought they needed. Gallant has three lasers in the practice. If you ask him why he needs all three, he will tell you they serve separate functions and then he will give you his definition of dentistry. The easy smile is back for a moment as he quotes a mentor, "Dentistry...it's about building watches under water."

Ultra precision under water is not the whole story either. "Compassion and empathy are just as important." An integral part of the practice for Gallant is ensuring patients feel comfortable so they can be confident in his care. "If the patient is nervous then it's a challenge for them to move ahead with necessary treatment." Gallant's experiences tell him that once the patient is comfortable, confidence comes easily and the "revolving door" that can be part of any dental practice is closed. A lifetime patient takes its place. "We're not building a high volume practice here. I treat patients and their families for the long term, so I'm more concerned on a daily basis with having the time we need for each patient to feel as if they are the only one."

A long-term perspective in patient-building grounded in compassion had to include Gallant learning more about how to prevent and manage pain. "When I started out, I realized there was no comprehensive methodology to keep patients pain and stress free. I thought nitrous was my only tool." To gain a

wider variety of options, Gallant took courses in sedation and received his New Jersey permit for enteral conscious sedation. He created Pleasant Dreams Dental Center, so that "nervous patients feel a higher degree of confidence... more as they might feel walking into a doctor's office." For those situations where deep sedation is required, Gallant maintains an association with a local anesthesiologist so that patient comfort is assured.

Aromatherapy and a relaxing reception environment do make the practice feel more like a high-end medical office. Patients are not scheduled on top of each other, so there is no one else waiting when a patient walks in. Office manager Barbara Callan, chairside assistant LouAnn Mossien and hygienist Kerianne

Esposito extend the 'feel good' experience through the shared goals of teaching patients about the importance of oral health to good overall health and by allowing plenty of time for even them most anxious patient to become calm. It's not surprising that Gallant's staff has been with him for some time and that they are highly educated. Everyone is on the same page when it comes to what is to be achieved. "My primary concern is for the health and well-being of each patient in my practice... specifically about patient adjustment to any work performed in the practice." It's not unusual for a patient to receive more than one call after a procedure to check on their progress. Should an issue be voiced that can't be

handled over the phone, an immediate appointment can be arranged. Extra time allotted routinely for every patient makes unanticipated concerns easy to address.

Gallant's own education isn't close to over yet. Passionate about keeping his 26-year practice energized and focused, Gallant believes strongly in the educational contribution of the AGD and is proud to have achieved his MAGD. He has been a clinical professor at the NYU College of Dentistry for implantology and wants to teach there again. He likes to learn and teach "new ways of approaching challenges in dentistry." One challenge that needed a fresh approach, in his view, is the prevalence of patients complaining of headache and jaw pain. Stress may be a significant cause of such pain, resulting in night grinding and clenching. "Bruxism is a common problem with up to 75 percent of the adult population experiencing it at some point in their lives." Clenching your teeth pinches the nerves that run through the temporomandibular joint, causing the body to produce the hormone cortisol, which increases your heart rate and blood pressure.¹ Night guard type appliances are often of great significance, but not every patient knows or understands their benefits. So Gallant looked for a material with the right properties to offer patients a quick and customized solution in the form of a chairside-delivered night



Kate Liddle



Dr. Greg Gallant

guard that takes about 30 seconds to make. He will conduct a Table Clinic on his technique at the 2011 Greater New York Dental Meeting to share this quick fix with other doctors. Gallant says, "A night guard appliance like this is suitable to offer the longer term restorative patient and can be used to help 'train' a patient for a lab-prepared appliance."



Gallant decided to use non-toxic and inexpensive thermoplastic to form his chairside guard. "Thermoplastic features a predictable balance between flexibility and rigidity. It will not adhere to undercuts and can be adapted to suit any anatomy, as well as adjusted to the desired level of fit so that accidental dislodging by the patient during sleep is not a concern. There are no impressions to take, no wait time and no additional visit for fit."

FOLLOWING IS A PREVIEW OF DR. GALLANT'S STEP-BY-STEP TECHNIQUE:

- A Temp Tab from All Dental Prodx is heated until it turns clear (about 1 min.) *Photo Fig. A and B*
- Softened Tab is immediately manipulated to remove stickiness (do not use with vinyl gloves) *Photo Fig. C*
- Long working time allows placement in the mouth as appropriate. In this case, the softened Tab is placed on the lower arch. *Photo Fig. D*
- Air-dry Tab for 10 seconds until material turns opaque. *Photo Fig. E*
- Remove Tab guard and rinse in cool water to finish set.
- Replace guard and check patient fit so that accidental dislodging with lips and tongue is not possible. (Thermoplastic may be removed, re-heated and re-formed once if necessary for better fit without loss of stability of the material.) *Photo Fig. F*
- Guard may be trimmed if necessary with an acrylic bur. *Photo Fig. G*



Fig. A



Fig. B



Fig. C



Fig. D



Fig. E



Fig. F



Fig. G

For more information on this technique call Dr. Gallant at 973-227-9211 or visit his website at www.GallantDental.com.

Dr. Greg Gallant maintains a restorative dental practice in West Caldwell, N.J. Greg, wife Cindy and their three children, as well as the 'world's best' toy poodle, Sophie, live in New Jersey.

Interview and Article by Kate Liddle, Galloway, N.J.

Photos courtesy of: Dr. G. Gildenberg

Photo: Product Shot Temp Tabs

Temp Tabs True Blue® technique contributed by All Dental Prodx

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Kate Liddle is the 1997 founder and managing partner of All Dental PRODX and is a patent holder in thermoplastics. A Skidmore graduate, recipient of the YMCA Tribute to Women Award, an IADFE fellow, Kate has lectured, consulted and published for the community since 1994. She is passionate about making a measurable contribution to the dental community. For information about the dental materials PRODX manufactures as well as the professional grade Patient Comfort products PRODX markets visit www.alldentalprodx.com.