Interview with Dr. Lorin F. Berland

Dr. Lorin Berland of Dallas has an impressive list of accomplishments that includes the creation of the Lorin Library Smile Style Guide; an Internet portal for denture wearers; a one-appointment inlay-onlay restorative and cosmetic technique; and originally founding the Dental Spa Concept.

What was your impression of dentistry growing up?

In my family, everyone trusted the dentist because my parents and grandparents didn’t want us to have the dental problems they did. They made sure we visited the dentist regularly.

What made you decide to go into dentistry, and what was the line of education that you followed?

I come from a family of bad and missing teeth. My grandmother, may she rest in peace, was the only one of my grandparents to have any remaining teeth. She was determined to keep as many as she could for as long as she could. She used to tell me, “If you were my dentist, I’d have all my teeth.” She told me to be a “lazy” dentist, in other words, don’t go looking for or make work. This instilled in me the importance of developing long-term dental relationships with my patients by taking care of them and always keeping their best interests in mind. My mother believed in the importance of saving teeth and, even back in the ’70s, the future of cosmetic dentistry.

When did you develop the Lorin Library Smile Style Guide?

I developed the Lorin Library Smile Style Guide over 30 years of dentistry. I began my career in dentistry as a Denture Technician. Even then I noticed a good looking denture always fits better than a bad looking denture. Usually, if we followed the shape and length of the natural teeth for immediate dentures, we got the best most natural and successful look.

Why did you think it was important to develop such a guide for practitioners rather than for patients?

Cosmetic Dentistry, whether removable or fixed, is an emotional, subjective matter. The more input we can get from the patient before treatment will minimize “buyer’s remorse” for the patient and “post cementation depression” for the dentist.

How is the guide distributed?

The guide is distributed directly from www.Digident.com. Several laboratories also make it available to their doctors.

Have you gotten much feedback from fellow professionals on the guide?

The feedback has all been very positive. The guide fills a void that was missing in communication between the patient, the dentist, and the laboratory.

When did you develop the Internet portal for denture wearers and what was the impetus behind it?

Like the Smile Style Guide, Denturewearers.com was a long time in the making. I always wondered how I could bring more denture wearers into my practice. Everybody seems to be talking about extreme makeovers. Plastic surgery, cosmetic dentistry and more have captured our collective imagination. However, denture wearers have been virtually ignored. And yet for those who need them, new dentures can make the most dramatic improvements. As our country’s population grows older, advancements in denture technology have made dentures better than ever.

So why is the denture wearing segment of our population so grossly ignored by “modern” dentistry? Maybe it’s because these patients don’t feel the need to see a dentist to “get their teeth cleaned.” By definition, they are not very likely to have a tooth ache. Maybe it’s a deeper societal issue of ignoring our older population. Whatever the reason, please try to remember that many of these denture pa-
tients probably have not been to a dentist in a long time, maybe not since a dentist pulled their last tooth. Who can blame them if they don’t go back, especially, if they don’t know why and how a denture doctor can help them improve their lives! These dentures need to be kept up. What these denture wearers don’t realize is that dentures need to be relined, rebased or replaced, just like everything else in life! Nothing lasts forever, and neither do dentures. For example, would these same people wear the clothes they bought five, 10 or even 20 years ago? Better yet, would they wear the same outfit each day of every month for a year? Even if they do, there would definitely be considerable wear and tear. Certainly, they would not fit the same way they once did. And how about the bacteria they harbor? People trust professionals to clean their clothes, so why not their dentures? There is no way to clean a denture that’s been in your mouth over three years with traditional over-the-counter cleansers, so professional denture cleanings are very important. Plus, considering we need to use our teeth to eat three times a day, snack, talk, even kiss, who can expect these “pieces of plastic” to last forever? Well, this is what people expect from their dentures, and it is an unrealistic plan that is either based on misinformation or, more likely, a lack of information entirely. Over time the ridges in a denture wearer’s mouth change, the dentures lose their fit. Denture wearers typically begin to go to their drugstores instead of their denture doctors, seeking an easy-fix solution for a complicated problem. Little do they realize, adhesives and cleaners will not help make their dentures fit or look any better when what they really need is a new denture.

On the Web site for your cosmetic and family dentistry practice, www.dallasdentalspa.com, you explain that you pursue conservative cosmetic dental techniques. How popular is a conservative approach? I think it’s the same all over the world. People want a dentist who will try to save their teeth, as many and as much of their teeth as they can.

Why do you think it is important for prospective patients to see that you prefer a conservative approach? Because those are the patients I prefer, the ones who prefer what I have to offer. It’s always best to treat from a patient’s perspective, especially when you share the same views on treatment.

Your Web site is quite impressive, with information for patients and fellow dental practitioners. Other dentists often even travel from their home city so they can benefit from your expertise. Is it more or less difficult to have a dental practitioner as a dental patient? It’s definitely different but rarely more difficult. There are certainly less explanations necessary.

You are a frequent lecturer and leader of seminars as well. How is your time separated between all your many activities? What is a typical day like for you? I’m an early riser so I start my day with a little coffee and exercise. Then it’s off to the office. I check and respond to my e-mail. Then I see patients all day. I’m most creative in the early morning before my family wakes up!

How much time do you devote to traveling and training others? I never give more than six lectures per year.

What do you like best about your work? The relationships with my patients.

Is there anything in the dental field that can really get under your skin and be somewhat annoying? The clock. Like most professionals and dentists in particular, running on time or scheduling with all the unexpected events common in dental practice can be frustrating.

What words of wisdom do you have for those practitioners just starting out in their careers? Love it or leave it, it’s too hard otherwise.