



TOP DENTISTS 2010

**Welcome to our eighth-annual
guide to the Valley's best dentists,
featuring 111 practitioners
in eight different areas.
Now say 'ahhhhh'...**

**Edited by Ashlea Deahl, Adam Klawonn & Keridwen Cornelius
Photography by Michael Woodall**



Cosmetic Dentists

About this specialty:

Many general dentists also specialize in elective cosmetic procedures, such as veneers, teeth whitening, dental implants and composite bonding to repair chipped or decaying teeth.

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Endodontists

About this specialty:

It used to be that when one of your teeth became diseased, you'd lose it. However, a visit to a dentist who specializes in endodontics (root canals, for the uninitiated) can save your tooth and your smile.

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WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN PATIENTS ARE SCARED OF DENTISTS?

The very first thing is to listen to them and understand why, because some people have really good reasons for their anxiety. I had a patient who, at one time, the closest I could get to him was down the hall and around the corner. He could look at me from around the corner if I was standing at my front door. And we would just have a conversation. We began to discover what his concerns were and address them. Now he's a wonderful patient. Every time he comes in he brings us treats.

BESIDES BRUSHING AND FLOSSING, WHAT SHOULD PEOPLE DO TO KEEP THEIR TEETH HEALTHY?

When they unraveled the human genome, they discovered that there is a gene for gum disease. If people know they have the disease, they can do something about it from an early age, not waiting until it's full-blown, and a lot of preventative things can be done. So screening and diagnosis are a huge deal. Also, they've recently discovered that the bacteria that every one of us has in our mouths, when it gets out of control, can be a trigger for everything from blood clots to heart infections. The mouth is more than a place to eat; it has to do with overall health in a big way. That's a big part of what we do with our patients. We're looking at overall health.... Cancer screening is a huge thing we do with every patient.

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST DENTAL EXPERIENCE AS A PATIENT?

I grew up very poor. I'm the oldest of 10 children. My first dental visit I was 10 or 11, and I had decays so bad on my lower molars that they extracted two permanent teeth. I had abscesses so bad I used to pound my head on the pillow to go to sleep at night – for a year or two. I didn't want to tell anybody because I didn't know what it would mean. So my first dental visit was, in a way, traumatic. But I can remember going home that night and lying in bed and thinking, 'I don't have pain.'

YOUR SONS ARE ALSO DENTISTS AT HARRIS DENTAL. WHAT'S THE BEST PART ABOUT BEING PART OF A FAMILY PRACTICE?

The surprising part was what they've taught me, because... they see things in a different way than I do. They relate to patients in a different way. I learn from them every day and I listen to them, and I know they listen to me. You don't get that practicing by yourself. Practicing by yourself you become very confident in yourself, but you don't often get the outward perspective.

— Interviewed by Keridwen Cornelius



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General Dentists

About this specialty:

This Jack- or Jill-of-all-trades provides the services needed to promote the maintenance of oral hygiene and tooth care. The American Dental Association recommends visiting a dentist at least once every six months.

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PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY

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WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO PEDIATRIC DENTISTRY?

I've always loved working with kids. So when I was in dental school and it got into the pediatric part of the program I just fell in love with it. It was where I was meant to me.

HOW DOES YOUR OFFICE MAKE CHILDREN LESS FEARFUL OF THE DENTIST?

The major thing is distraction. There are video games and TVs on the ceiling. There's a movie theater when they walk in, and the check-in counter looks like a candy counter. The other main thing is talking to them the whole time. We're constantly talking to them. It keeps their mind off of things. Keep things fun and they think, 'Oh, what's the big deal?'

WHAT'S THE MOST COMMON PROBLEM YOU SEE IN CHILDREN'S TEETH?

We have so many processed sugars in our diet now. The biggest thing we're seeing lately is in the adolescents – the pre-teens and early teens – drinking energy drinks. That's a new battle we're facing. It used to be soda but now we're getting a little bit of both. Energy drinks have more sugar in them, so we're seeing lots of decay.

YOU HAVE FIVE CHILDREN OF YOUR OWN. ARE YOU THEIR DENTIST?

Yes. I have a 13-year-old girl, twin 10-year-old boys, a girl who's 6 and a boy who's 4.

HAVE THEY HAD CAVITIES YET?

Yep (laughs). They're still kids, and we're still parents.

DO YOU RESTRICT ANYTHING THEY EAT OR DRINK? ANY BANS ON HALLOWEEN CANDY?

No, and I wouldn't tell any of my patients to do that either. Moderation in all things.

WHAT'S THE MOST DIFFICULT CASE YOU'VE EVER ENCOUNTERED?

The hardest ones are the little infants when they come in with baby-bottle decay, when their teeth are worn to the gums and they're only 15 months old. There are no options there and you're stuck to have to take teeth out. Those are hard just emotionally.

WHO'S HARDER TO DEAL WITH – THE CHILDREN OR THE PARENTS?

The parents (laughs). It just comes down to the concern for their children. It causes them to have more anxiety. I don't think it's over-protective. I don't think we could protect our kids too much.

— Interviewed by Ashlea Deahl



Oral/ Maxillofacial Surgeons

About this specialty:

These surgeons specialize in the treatment of facial defects, misaligned jaws and problematic wisdom teeth. They may also treat accident victims.

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Patricio W. Rabot

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Orthodontists

About this specialty:

Many people with misaligned teeth visit an orthodontist in hopes of a treatment. Options include braces, retainers, headgear and, in rare cases, breaking the jaw to set it in a proper position.

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Nathan Trent Davis

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WHY DID YOU CHOOSE SCOTTSDALE?

I live not too far from here, and I wanted to be close to home. I wanted to be able to walk to work, run or bike - whatever the case may be. This building became available last-minute, and it's still very close, and it all ended up working out very well. Being that it's an old home, it fit perfectly. This place fits exactly what I was looking for. I didn't think it would be like this; I always thought it would be an office building, a condo or a strip mall. But it worked out.

WHAT DO YOU WANT THE PATIENT'S EXPERIENCE TO BE LIKE?

I want them to have it all. I want them to have a great place to come to, meaning it's comforting to them - it's clean and inviting. I want them to have a friendly staff. When they walk in the door, everyone greets them - they know who they are. And I want them to have the quality dentistry that they deserve. I think finding the whole combination is hard.

DESCRIBE YOUR FIRST EXPERIENCE AS A DENTAL PATIENT.

He was a pretty old dentist in an old, old office. I remember that when I left the office, I had stuff all over my face. I was 13 at the time. I was like, 'You know, that wasn't so nice.' But being that my parents were very strict, I was not allowed to scream or cry or whine, so that was the only comment and I kept it to myself.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE NEW DENTAL TECHNOLOGIES THAT HAVE BEEN VALUABLE TO YOUR FIELD?

Digital X-rays. There's a lot less radiation involved with that. It's anywhere from 79 percent to 90 percent less radiation, and you can actually manipulate the images on your computer screen.... There's also laser dentistry. It's still limited, but for soft tissue, it works great. Let's say somebody has a really gummy smile - meaning you see a lot more gums than teeth. You can actually do some gum re-contouring with the laser and shape it. You don't have to suture (the wound) and you're not actually cutting into someone's tissue with a scalpel. With the laser, most people come back the next day and you can't see anything. They heal that fast.

WHAT IS SOMETHING INTERESTING PEOPLE MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU?

Believe it or not, I knit and crochet. Every time someone has a baby, I'm on it. They get a new baby blanket. I'm working on one right now for one of my patients.

— Interviewed by Adam Klawonn



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C. Christopher Murphy

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A. Paul Serrano*

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Pediatric Dentists

About this specialty:

These dentists specialize
in treating and maintaining
proper oral hygiene in children,
ranging from infants to adoles-
cents. Children should visit the
dentist by their first birthday.

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100, Scottsdale, 480-556-
0600, smilesbyapdo.com

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Periodontists

About this specialty:

Periodontists specialize in
diagnosing, treating and pre-
venting gum disease.

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Prosthodontists

About this specialty:

If you need dentures, a crown,
bridgework, or tooth replace-
ment, call a prosthodontist.
These dentists specialize in
replacing missing teeth and
restoring natural teeth.

Douglas G. Benting

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PM

WHO DECIDES WHO'S A TOP DENTIST?

Frequently asked questions about how our *Top Dentists* are selected.

Who picks the dentists?

The dentists are selected through a peer-review survey. The theory is that medical professionals are best qualified to judge medical professionals. To select the dentists, *PHOENIX* magazine randomly mails 1,500 surveys to Valley dentists. The surveys ask the dentists to nominate those dentists who, in their judgment, are the best in their field and related fields.

Does *PHOENIX* magazine check out all of the dentists on the list?

Yes. Once the list of *Top Dentists* is compiled, *PHOENIX* magazine's fact-checkers verify the dentists' names, addresses, phone numbers and specialties. In addition, each name is checked against the state's dental board to determine whether the dentist has been convicted of malpractice or has faced other disciplinary actions. Those that have are removed from the list.

Why not ask patients to rate the best dentists?

Patients generally lack the medical expertise to judge a dentist's qualifications, and different patients will have varying opinions on the same dentist (i.e., one patient's best experience may be another patient's worst). Should we ever do a ranking based solely on bedside manner, querying patients might be an option.

My dentist says he was left off the list because he doesn't advertise in *PHOENIX* magazine. Could that be true?

Absolutely not. Like any credible publication, *PHOENIX* magazine's editorial content is not dictated by who advertises. There are cases, however, when a dentist on the list also has an ad in the magazine, but that's merely coincidence. Dentists have no advance knowledge of whether they've made the list, and the *PHOENIX* magazine sales staff doesn't see the list until you see the list. Like you, they both have to wait until the magazine is published to find out who's made the list.

Why do you include cosmetic dentistry as a specialty when it's not actually recognized by the dental board?

True, cosmetic dentistry is not a recognized specialty by the American Dental Association, but many general dentists today are specializing in cosmetic procedures, and patients are increasingly requesting information on cosmetic dentistry, so we wanted to offer yet another valuable resource to our readers.



If my dentist's not on the list, does that mean he/she is not a good dentist?

No. Although peer-review is considered the most reliable methodology, it's not perfect. To be recognized by a large number of peers, it stands to reason that a dentist would have to have practiced in the Valley for several years. There are many newcomers who are undoubtedly excellent physicians, but haven't yet gained widespread recognition. In addition, there are many dentists in small practices or outlying areas who, likewise, haven't gained that widespread recognition.

Don't the same dentists make the list every year?

Many dentists do, but there are many new dentists on the list each year, too. Because the established, well-known dentists are exactly that - established and well known - the list might favor that kind of physician. Given the importance of choosing a dentist, however, *PHOENIX* magazine views that as a healthy bias.

My dentist was on the list last year, but isn't there this year. What does that mean?

It doesn't necessarily mean anything, and it certainly shouldn't be viewed as evidence of a drop-off in the dentist's effectiveness. Getting on the list once doesn't guarantee that a dentist will be on the list indefinitely - the selection process begins anew each year.

Each year you do short feature profiles on a handful of dentists. How do you choose which ones to profile?

Essentially, we "throw a dart at the map." Because every dentist on the list is considered among the best in the Valley, every dentist is worthy of being profiled. Needless to say, it would be impossible to profile all of them, so we randomly select three or four each year.