

GreenDentistry

Special Report: What you need to know about going green, part 1

■ Dentists who choose to develop green practices may find themselves at head of pack with new environmentally conscious patients

ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AND THE need to act to minimize harm to the planet is a common theme in 2010, and dentists are developing environmental consciousness in response to their patients' heightened awareness and because of their own worries about environmental sustainability.

Front Street Dental Centre in Stratford, Ont., led by Dr. Ali Farahani, has billed itself as Canada's first eco-friendly dental office. Dr. Farahani worked in collaboration with the nearby University of Waterloo and fourth year honors student Mitale Suchak to explore consumption practices at traditional dental offices, compared to those at the environmentally-friendly type of practice that he proposed. Dr. Farahani also acted as Suchak's honors supervisor for her thesis "The Environmentally-responsible Dental Practice."

During research, they surveyed



dental offices to determine their level of dental resources, electricity, energy, chemical and water usage, and waste. They also determined the type of flooring, paint, and lighting found in the offices, as well as the types of com-

puter monitors and dental vacuum pumps.

"It means that we are not extracting more from the environment than nature can produce," says 34-year-old Dr. Farahani, who opened his practice in April 2007. "When I created the office, I thought it was the right thing to do. A lot of dentistry is very wasteful and harmful. We produce two bags of garbage in a week, whereas most offices produce that much garbage in a day. There is a lot of garbage created just from one visit."

Dr. Farahani uses reusable patient bibs, tea tree oil as a disinfectant, and uses re-usable stainless steel tips instead of plastic suction tips. He calculated that by using stainless steel he could avoid the disposal of 100,000 plastic tips to his local landfill. In addition, he uses stainless steel (Hu-Friedy) prophylaxis cups

instead of the disposable ones. Dr. Farahani's practice saves approximately 24,600 gallons of water per year by using a dry dental vacuum pump from Sable Industries.

"Moreover, we do not have the usual chemical soup that is found in dental offices," he says. "You will not find the usual chemical smells. Our patients appreciate that. We use products that are very gentle like hydrogen peroxide."

While establishing a very 'green' dental practice represented an additional upfront cost to Dr. Farahani that he estimates to be about \$75,000 more than the cost to launch a standard practice, he has no doubt that being an environmentally ethical entrepreneur will pay off in the long run.

"I'm certain it will be worth it," he says.

For the time being, there is an absence of incentives or grants available to dentists who want to make their office more 'green,' notes Dr. Farahani.

In this unique series of Special Reports, DENTAL CHRONICLE sets out to examine the primary challenges facing dentists in Canada today. This first instalment in the 2010 series **The Year of Green Dentistry** looks at Best Practices for Green Dentistry, and relates the experiences of some practitioners and industry members as they develop and adapt to green programs. Publication of this series is made possible by Henry Schein Canada.

"From Henry Schein's perspective, we really believe it is our responsibility as an active member of the dental industry to look for the trends that are coming to dentistry," says Peter Jugoon, Vice President, Marketing and Planning, Henry Schein Canada. "We are doing a number of things around being more environmentally friendly, whether it is internal or external. For example, our distribution centers have gone paperless, so people are walking around with headsets on, being directed by central command to the bins and the products they need to pick." Jugoon noted that Henry Schein has also reduced paper consumption in their shipment packing, replacing paper with biodegradable air bubble pillows. They are also now using brown shipping boxes instead of the white boxes that had to be manufactured through a bleaching process.

"We are doing more and more to ensure that green products are front and center," said Jugoon. "The issue around the environment is not isolated to dentistry; it's a global issue that will only continue to grow as time goes by."

"As the awareness of [green dentistry] increases, as manufacturers come out with new green products that can be implemented into practices, and as patients demand it, that puts the impetus on us to provide as many green solutions as possible."

COMING IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

How digital imaging can improve your practice



Dr. Farahani



Jugoon



Dr. Suchak



Mink



Dr. Cooper

This Special Report on Green Dentistry was written by Louise Gagnon, a frequent contributor to Dental Chronicle.

CONCERN ABOUT ENVIRONMENT

In the U.S., the Eco-Dentistry
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