



Summer Services

MEETING A PATIENT'S NEEDS
IS DR. SHARIF'S TOP PRIORITY

BY JOHN BYRD



Dr. Sharif, who has been practicing for 23 years, is a diplomate of the American Board of Pediatric Dentistry and an assistant professor at Howard University.

When you've practiced dentistry in the same community for more than 23 years, meeting a patient's evolving needs is an obvious professional focus—so, too, the community's requirements as new generations emerge.

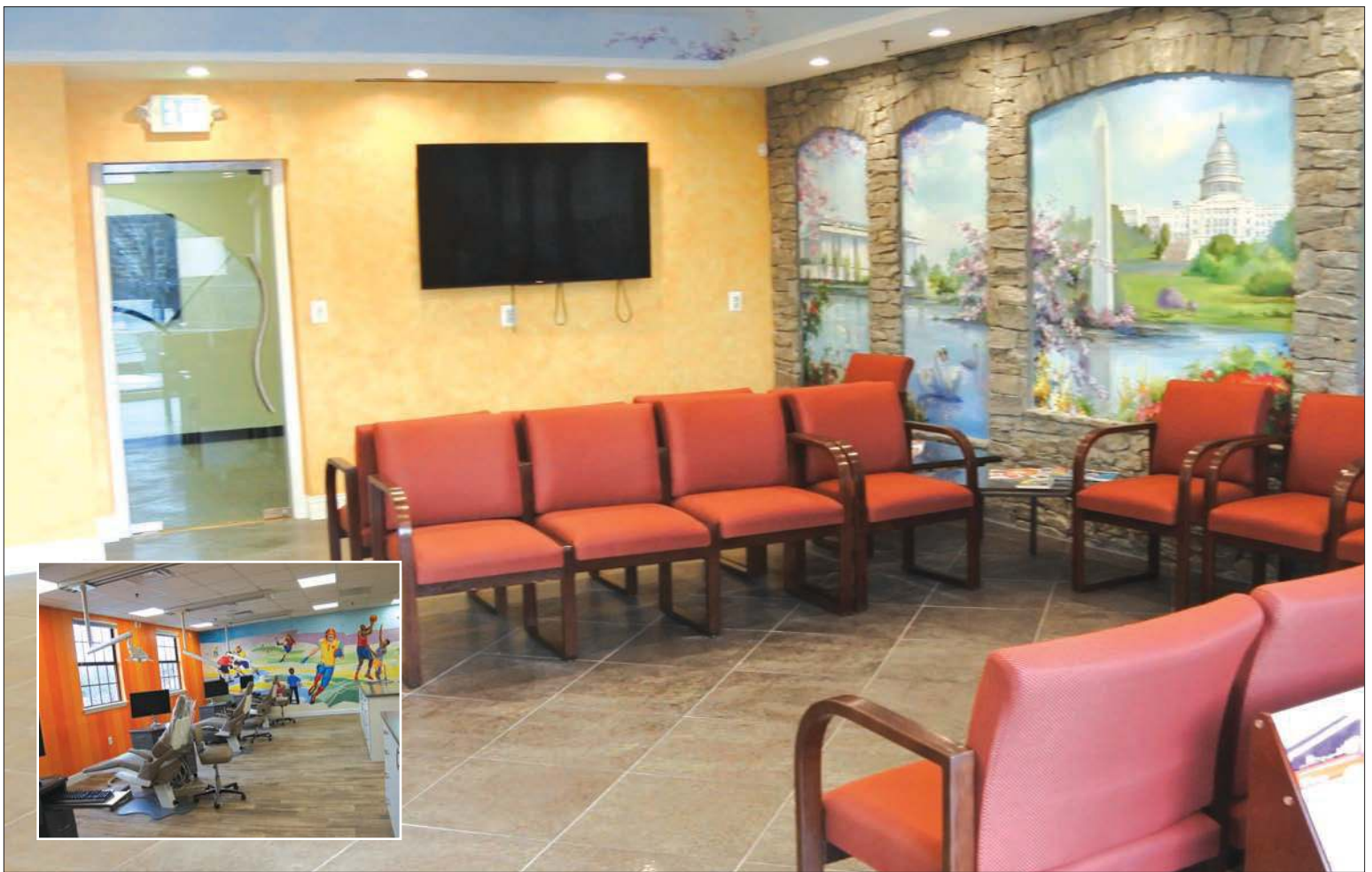
Dr. Shohreh Sharif has observed this process close-up, developing a fine-tuned sense of what her patients will need next, and how meeting those needs will affect the direction of her practice—Greater Washington Dentistry (GWD)—which recently opened a Merrifield office to better service Vienna and Falls Church.

"There are so many variables in a dynamic community," Dr. Sharif says. "Patients we have previously guided through pediatric issues are now in college. Their needs have changed, yet our goal has always been to provide for each patient over the long-term."

Sharif estimates that 25-30% of her patients currently in their 20s started coming to her when they were age 8 or younger.

"It's personally gratifying to see the next generation maturing so beautifully," she notes. "It's a tribute to caring parents who want the best for their kids, and to their children who have embraced good dental health habits. Interestingly, we are reaching a point where some former pediatric patients are coming back with their own children. This is verifying. It's one of the reasons we now have two offices and a growing number of specialties."

Dr. Sharif finds the seasonal rhythms of her practice compelling as summer rolls around; summer has become the time to touch base with patients who are transitioning from school to adult self-sufficiency. Several GWD services are tailored specifically to this young adult segment.



SEASON FOR WHITENING TEETH

Summer is the time when teens and patients in their early 20s begin to noticeably pay more attention to their appearance, health and well-being. Young adults correctly associate whiter, brighter smiles with sunlight and warmer weather, which is one of the reasons a consultation with GWD gets patients off to a good start by helping them identify which “whitening plan” is best suited to their needs.

Two options are especially popular:

- “Take home” whitening, a method for brightening teeth that utilizes a custom-designed tray and a specially-formulated whitening gel. This process whitens natural teeth and may contain ingredients that facilitate comfort. At-home professional whitening generally takes 10-14 days, although positive results may be observed in as few as three to five days.

- “In-office” professional whitening. The GWD approach employs a curing light to enhance the effectiveness of the whitening gel by accelerating the material. The procedure can take up to an hour and is done in the office.

SPORTS GUARD

When younger people are actively engaged in team sports, common-sense protections should always be part of the picture.

While a great source of fun, positive interaction and

self-worth, soccer, basketball, baseball and softball can all-too easily result in oral, facial and head injuries. As a practical matter, a mouth guard is the one piece of equipment that protects a young athlete from dental trauma and concussion.

Though stock mouth guards and mouth-formed protectors are commonly available, Dr. Sharif has observed that the purpose of a “sports guard” is not only to protect teeth, but also the soft tissue, bone structure and temporomandibular joints.

“A custom-designed mouth guard has better impact absorption; there’s just no substitute for the benefit this provides,” Dr. Sharif observes. “A sports guard is also comfortable and doesn’t inhibit breathing or speaking.”

The sports guard is fabricated by GWD professionals in the office. It’s made from thermoplastic polymer and formed over a model of the athlete’s dentition. It’s designed to separate the “condyle” (end of the bone) from the base of the skull by placing the mandible (jawbone) in a forward position. Result: the likelihood of a concussion by a blow to the jaw is significantly reduced.

Dr. Sharif estimates that her practice now fabricates hundreds of sports guards per year.

“It’s the essential appliance for anyone who is active in team sports,” Dr. Sharif says. “Weighed against the cost and pain of correcting a serious dental trauma, the benefit is incalculable. In simple terms, engaging in contact sports without a sports guard is a needlessly foolish risk.”

“A custom-designed mouth guard has better impact absorption; there’s just no substitute for the benefit this provides when one is playing team sports.”

—Dr. Shohreh Sharif

Because team sports can all-too easily result in oral, facial and head injuries, a custom-designed mouth guard is the one piece of equipment that protects a young athlete from dental trauma and concussion. GWD fabricate hundreds of sports guards per year.

Dr. Sharif estimates that 25-30% of her patients currently in their 20s started coming to her when they were age 8 or younger. Summer is traditionally the time when teens and younger patients come to GWD looking for a “whitening plan.”

Two popular whitening options: “Take-home” is a method for brightening teeth that utilizes a custom-designed tray and a whitening gel; the “In-office” procedure employs a curing light to enhance whitening gel effectiveness.