

Revisiting Dentistry

By Dr. Kelvin Mah



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In the same way that today's computers do so much more than merely compute data, modern dentistry is anything but the ordinary "get your teeth cleaned and maybe some repair work" experience that you may remember as a kid. The truth is, modern dentistry is now about transforming lives. It's about enabling people to live life happier, healthier and more fulfilled.

It's no longer about diagnosing a problem and supplying a service. It's about partnering with patients to deeply and personally understand their lifestyle goals and aspirations, and building a customized treatment plan that brings to them all of the rich and rewarding possibilities that modern dentistry can provide. Plus, compared to the old days, modern dentistry is quicker, much more comfortable, safer and adheres to unprecedented quality standards that put patient safety first.

And if all of that weren't enough to invite you to revisit your definition of dentistry, then simply stop by a modern dental practice – but don't be shocked if you step out to ensure that you've entered the right place! In my City Square Shopping Centre practice, for example, you'll find comfortable chairs, a stylishly decorated atmosphere to promote a sense of calm, complimentary beverages, an incredibly friendly and warm staff, and other delightful elements that'll have you saying: "Toto, we're not in an old-fashioned dentist's office anymore!"

Modern Dentistry in Action

Of course, all of these advancements, innovations and considerations would, ultimately, be meaningless if it didn't all combine to make a lasting, tangible difference in the lives of patients. Patients like Jessica. Jessica has been working with me as a dental hygienist for the last two and half years. This past summer, she told me that there was something "missing" from her smile – but she wasn't sure what.

I carefully listened to Jessica so that I could personally understand her goals and aspirations. I didn't burden her with worrying about how we could achieve her vision – that wasn't the priority. What mattered during our initial conversations was what she wanted to experience. Jessica and I developed a vision of what she wanted to achieve. She wanted to radiate. She wanted to feel the power that only a broad, unabashed, totally authentic smile can give – and inspire in others.

Nourishing Inner Beauty

Now, based only on what I've told you so far, you might start to think that Jessica is vain, and her goal here was to alter her natural appearance to please others, or become someone she isn't. Let me prevent you from drawing that false conclusion. Jessica, like almost all of my patients, was (and is) not overly concerned with how she looks to others, no more than you or me. Her motive wasn't to change who she was. Rather, it was simply to experience something that would delight how she felt inside.

Would this also have a positive effect on her appearance, and in turn, how she would be perceived by others? Yes, that can't be denied. But, again, that wasn't Jessica's motive; nor is it the motive of most of the patients I help. Fundamentally and frankly, the goal is almost always the same – to help patients realize the outer smile to match their inner smile.

Building the Solution

Now that we knew what Jessica wanted to experience, my job was to introduce her to an array of possibilities that could make it happen. Quite honestly, next to the joy in my patients' faces when they first look in the mirror after their results, the process of showing them all of the possibilities that modern dentistry can provide is my greatest pleasure. Jessica loved looking at her "smile makeover" possibilities on the 40-inch monitor. She could literally see how her smile would look after possible dental solutions. After introducing various possibilities, looking at expected results, and discussing benefits, limitations, and other key details associated with each option, we agreed that the best solution for Jessica was dental veneers: super-thin, custom-made shells of porcelain tooth-colored material that cover the front of the teeth. Indeed, these are not the veneers of old. The new materials are stunningly realistic; they feel and look like natural teeth and not like fake, "perfect" teeth. Veneers dramatically improve tooth color, shape, size and length, and are one of the quickest ways to transform and enhance a smile and take it to that next level.



Above right, top and bottom: Jessica before

The Results

Jessica's permanent veneers were placed in September, and I still remember the look on her face when she saw them in the mirror for the first time – it was surprise, amazement and joy all mixed together! Indeed, as a dental hygienist, she had seen numerous patients benefit from transformative dental solutions. But experiencing it directly is something else, and it was a wonderful scene that neither Jessica nor I will ever forget.

Indeed, as you can see from the pictures accompanying this story, Jessica is living proof that modern dentistry is rich with possibilities not just for enhancing smiles, but also for improving lives inside and out. It's also a testament to how a skilled dentist can elevate the craft of dentistry to an art form by incorporating a deep awareness of a patient's unique personality and expressiveness, and combining that with in-depth clinical and technical excellence. Thank you Jessica, for helping me fulfil my mission as a professional and a person, which is and always will be: Enriching Lives, One Smile at a Time!

Dr. Kelvin Mah's relaxing, stylish and ultra-modern practice, Smile City Square Dental, is located inside Vancouver's City Square Shopping Centre. Dr. Mah and his warm and inviting team provide a variety of patient-first dental solutions, including general dentistry, smile makeovers, restorative dentistry, and oral health procedures. Dr. Mah is a graduate of UBC's prestigious Dental School, and is a member of the exclusive, invitation-only California Center for Advanced Dental Studies – a post graduate education program that creates today's and tomorrow's elite-level dental professionals. www.smilecitysquare.com, drk@smilecitysquare.com

Jessica reflects on that amazing moment when she first saw her new Smile City Square Dental smile:

"It was completely amazing – I couldn't believe the results. It wasn't that I hated my smile before – I didn't. But there was always 'something missing' from my smile. I couldn't put my finger on it. I just knew that it wasn't all that it could be. But that all changed with Dr. Mah. The results exceeded my wildest dreams, and today the only regret I have is wondering why I waited so long to make this change. I notice a dramatic, positive change in my life, and the people around me can feel it too. Funny, but many people don't even know that I've transformed my smile – they just say that there's something 'special' and 'inspiring' about me, but they can't quite put their finger on it (of course, after they read this article, the secret will be out!). Really though, the improvement is not just about looks. It's about self-esteem and confidence. It's about adding that 'something missing' and experiencing a whole new side of myself. Thank you Dr. Mah. Every smile of mine from now on has your signature on it!"