

new dentist NEWS



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‘IN THIS SEASON OF MY LIFE, I ENJOY THE BENEFITS THAT A DSO PROVIDES ME’

BY DAVID BURGER

Ever since she was in dental school, Emma J. Guzman, D.D.S., had been curious about dental support organizations.

“They seemed to offer a lot of benefits while providing a good work-life balance for the doctors,” Dr. Guzman said. “So, when the opportunity presented itself, I chose to work at a DSO due to the competitive salary and the benefits.”

The creation of DSOs has allowed many dentists to enjoy the support of professional office management so they feel that they can

better focus on the patient while delivering excellent dental care.

New dentists can find meaningful career pathways in a DSO, especially when the opportunities offered by a particular DSO are in alignment with the dentist’s life goals.

Dr. Guzman, whose parents emigrated from Guatemala, is a general and cosmetic dentist practicing in Brooklyn, New York, with the DSO Tend Dental. She completed her doctor of dental surgery degree at the University

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Periodontist embraces DSO CAREER, ORGANIZED DENTISTRY ROLES

BY STACIE CROZIER

During her time as a dental student and a periodontics resident, Kerri Simpson, D.D.S., was not planning a career path with a dental support organization. But during her residency, she met with the founding members of an endodontics-focused DSO with practices in West Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland who gave her a different view of what a DSO could be.

"I have always known the three original practitioners who started our specialty group, but never thought of practicing with them until they approached me," Dr. Simpson said. "To be able to work beside some of the most respected humans in their field and community was a desire for me, especially since we were from two different fields. The idea of collaboration was a dream."

Although Meridian Dental Specialists is a large DSO, Dr. Simpson is the only dentist in her Morgantown, West Virginia, periodontics-focused office, along with two hygienists, two assistants, two front desk members and an office manager.

"Even though I am by myself, one of the greatest benefits of being a part of my DSO is that I have access to others," she said.

Dr. Simpson is also passionate about participating in organized dentistry at the local, state and national levels. She served as the new dentist member of the West Virginia Dental Association Executive Council and secretary of her component society, the Monongahela Valley Dental Society. She also was elected ADA delegate for West Virginia — the first time a woman in her state ran and was elected to the office.



Photo courtesy of Dr. Simpson

Collaboration: Kerri Simpson, D.D.S., takes a moment to meet with ADA President George R. Shepley, D.D.S. (left), and ADA 6th District trustee Michael D. Medovic, D.D.S., during the International College of Dentists new fellows' reception in conjunction with ADA SmileCon 2022 in Houston.

"Organized dentistry offers so many resources to help new dentists, and it's more than just the tangible benefits and products, such as loan refinancing, life insurance, continuing education, advocacy, etc.," Dr. Simpson said. "It's the actual people, the camaraderie, the long-term relationships. It's meeting colleagues in your area or from across the globe. It's learning from those who have been through it. These are aspects that are truly invaluable, especially for a new dentist."

To read the full profile on Dr. Simpson, visit the New Dentist News website. ■

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New dentists can find right fit at DSOs

(continued from cover)



Photo courtesy of Dr. Guzman

DSO: Emma Guzman, D.D.S., is the child of immigrants and works at a DSO in New York.

“The logistics of operating the office is a standardized system that is already set up and the team just has to execute.”

– Dr. Guzman

at Buffalo School of Dental Medicine and was a general practice resident in the Bronx.

“While working at a DSO as an associate, you practice dentistry and you work on your development as a leader,” Dr. Guzman said. “As a lead dentist, I was able to practice dentistry, mentor associates, respond to patient complaints, assist in managing the team and work closely with the manager to ensure success. It is not much different than being an associate in a private practice. The same way you have to find a practice that is the right fit for you, it’s the same

for DSOs. It can be very rewarding if it is the right fit.”

Dr. Guzman believes that choosing to work for a DSO was the right fit for her.

“In this season of my life, I enjoy the benefits that a DSO provides me,” she said. “I am at a point in my career where people are inquiring about ownership, and I honestly prefer being able to leave work and that part of my day is done. I am able to practice dentistry how I see fit without the additional business-related responsibilities and stress that owners have to deal with. The benefits that I see in working for a DSO include having systems in place for marketing, patient retention and hiring

a team. The logistics of operating the office is a standardized system that is already set up and the team just has to execute.”

Yashar Sekhvatmandi, D.D.S., works for Willamette Dental Group, which has nearly 50 offices spread throughout Oregon, Washington and Idaho. Born and raised in Houston, Dr. Sekhvatmandi graduated from the Texas A&M School of Dentistry in 2019.

He became interested in the Willamette Dental Group when he met with a recruiter during his residency.

“I felt drawn to the support of a large organization,” Dr. Sekhvatmandi said. “I appreciated having efficient systems in place that helped things run smoothly. I really enjoyed the camaraderie with my co-residents during my residency program, and I wanted to be somewhere that I could collaborate and have the support of

multiple dentists in the same office. We have well-established roles within our teams, which has allowed for our assistants and hygienists to consistently contribute to our goals in unique ways. This has led to a more fulfilling team dynamic for everyone involved, which I believe is important as a new dentist.” He said that as an associate, he can leave work at the clinic.

“Many of my friends who are partners or

owners have administrative and business responsibilities outside of business hours,” he said. “[At my office,] we work as a team with many expanded-function staff. This allows us to distribute tasks to prevent from overburdening the dentist.”

Dr. Sekhvatmandi said that his advice to fellow new dentists and dental students is that it is vital to understand what is important to them.

“Be open to trying new things, as well as being comfortable with change if things are not going well,” he said. “The first few years as a new dentist are difficult but also very rewarding. Keep in mind there are no easy paths, but finding a good fit can help relieve some of the inevitable difficulties.” ■



Photo courtesy of Dr. Sekhvatmandi

Northwest: Yashar Sekhvatmandi, D.D.S., works for Willamette Dental Group, which has nearly 50 offices spread throughout Oregon, Washington and Idaho.



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DSO 101

WHAT TO KNOW ABOUT DENTAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

What is a DSO?

Dental support organizations — commonly known as DSOs — are entities that offer administrative, marketing and nonclinical support to dental practices. Practice owners contract with DSOs to manage the business side of their practice while they focus on providing care to patients. DSOs vary in size and structure, and they exist in every state and even internationally. DSOs may be locally or nationally branded, and they are either privately held or partner with private equity firms that furnish the necessary capital to provide infrastructure, recruitment tools, advanced technology and administrative support functions. DSOs are one type of business model among multi-site group practices.



What are the benefits of working for a DSO?

The Association of Dental Support Organizations cites increased time with patients, practice support and better work-life balance as some of the main advantages to working for dental practices supported by DSOs. Other advantages may include salary and benefits packages, practice location flexibility, mentoring programs, continuing education, and access to dental technology and tools typically provided by DSOs.



What are the potential drawbacks?

Similar to any group practice, drawbacks could include working hours determined by the dentist or dentists who own the supported dental practice, accepting insurance plans that have already been negotiated, having limited flexibility with time off and facing restrictions as part of your contract.



Contract considerations

If you decide to work for a DSO, you may want to consider the following when negotiating your contract:

- What is important to you in your career as a dentist? Do you want a path to ownership of a single practice, or do you want to explore other investment opportunities? Is your goal to become a specialist? Explore several DSOs to find the one that can best help you achieve your goals.
- What is the length of the contract? Does it automatically renew?
- What are the exact hours you will be required to work? Are they all at a specific location?
- Is the position salaried or per diem? What is the range of pay, and how is production calculated?
- What are the benefits offered?
- Are there any limitations if you leave the practice? Is there a restrictive covenant in place?



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Ask the Expert:

WHAT SHOULD I CONSIDER BEFORE STARTING A GROUP PRACTICE?



Ms. Talpa

BY DIANA TALPA — BMO

Dear Diana: *I am a solo practice dentist, and I see an evolution in dentistry occurring all around me. A lot of my peers have joined or started a group practice. I'm thinking about starting a group practice, but what should I consider before making the leap? — Unite and Conquer*

Dear Unite and Conquer: There are many benefits to group practice, but there are also many items to consider before moving away from solo practice. A few of these considerations are:

Changes in daily operations

In terms of daily operations, running a solo practice is vastly different from running a group practice. Anything from booking appointments to collecting payments is now shared among practitioners. You will have to look at how patients are scheduled, who does the administrative work and how much hands-on business control you are willing to relinquish.

Strategic considerations

Pay special attention to a long-term plan and your practice vision. Benefits of group practice include shared costs, mutual interest in the marketing of the business and more flexibility for time off since your patients can consult one of your partners instead of visiting a different location to see a dentist. Group practices may become complicated if everyone does not share the same vision and goals. Ensure you have a well-thought-out entry and exit plan for associate dentists, so you can avoid unnecessary complications if someone changes their mind.

Be prepared to invest time and money

When you started your solo practice, you had to consider your finances and spend a lot of time establishing your name. At the beginning of a group venture, you will have to put extra time outside your office hours to grow your group practice. You will also have to create systems that are feasible for everyone to maintain the practice culture you're trying to create. You might even wish to add a different location or an expanded clinic. If you need to take a bank loan, ensure you are making an informed decision. You can contact BMO or work with another loan provider depending on your financial needs and long-term goals. Ensure the financial burden is equally distributed among all partners to avoid problems in the future.

There are several benefits to group practice, but you should absolutely do your homework. You should plan carefully before committing to a group practice and consider how it will impact your life. Explore the many resources that describe important considerations and provide guidance on how to build the best strategy. Don't expect things to run smoothly right away. Start a group practice with passionate people you can trust and rely on. ■

Ms. Talpa works with privately held companies to consistently deliver innovative, industry-specific financing and cash management solutions to meet their diverse needs. As a vice president in commercial banking at BMO, she leverages her background in business valuations, financial analysis and commercial credit underwriting to add value, foster long-lasting relationships and — above all — help dentists realize their vision for practice success.

New dentists drive DSO trends



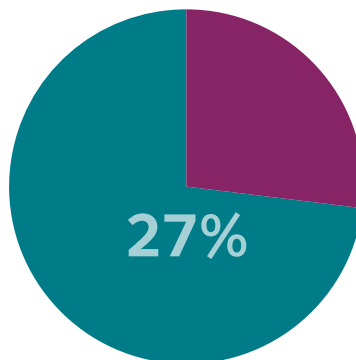
ADA American Dental Association®

New dentists are more likely to be affiliated with a dental support organization than older dentists.

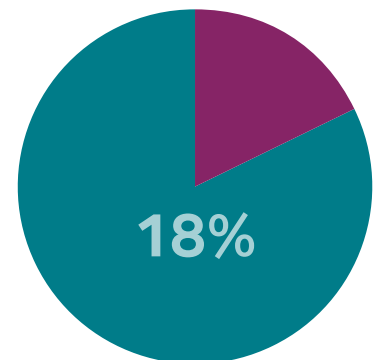
According to data from the ADA Health Policy Institute, 27% of dentists who graduated from dental school five or less years ago and 18% of dentists who graduated six to 10 years ago are affiliated with a DSO. Affiliation is lower among dentists who graduated from dental school more than 10 years ago.

In general, higher rates of dentists are affiliating with DSOs than in the past. Head to Page 10 for more HPI data related to practice modality. ■

PERCENT OF DENTISTS AFFILIATED WITH A DSO BY YEARS OUT OF DENTAL SCHOOL



Up to five years



Six to 10 years

Source: ADA Health Policy Institute analysis based on practicing dentists in 2022.

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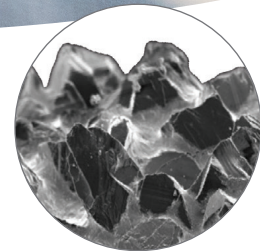
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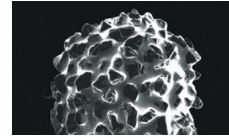
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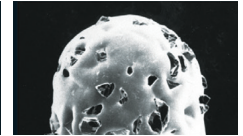
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By the numbers: PRACTICE MODALITY

BY MARY BETH VERSACI

Data from the ADA Health Policy Institute show practice modality is changing, with higher rates of dentists affiliating with dental support organizations and practicing in groups and fewer dentists going into solo practice than in the past.

In 2022, 13% of U.S. dentists were affiliated with a DSO, an increase from 10.4% in 2019 and 8.8% in 2017. That rate is higher among dentists who graduated six to 10 years ago and even more so among dentists who graduated up to five years ago.

“Our data consistently show this, that early-career dentists are not practicing in typical models that, for example, a generation ago, dentists would be practicing in,” said Marko Vujicic, Ph.D., ADA chief economist and vice president of HPI.

According to data on practice sizes, regardless of DSO affiliation, 24% of dentists who graduated 10 or less years ago are working

in practices with 10 or more locations. In comparison, 12% of dentists who graduated 11-25 years ago and 8% of dentists who graduated more than 25 years ago are working in practices with 10 or more locations.

The distribution of dentists in solo practice follows similar trends across career stages, with 17% of dentists who graduated 10 or less years

ago working as solo practitioners compared with 38% of dentists who graduated 11-25 years ago and half of dentists who graduated more than 25 years ago.

In general, state trends follow

national trends when it comes to DSO affiliation and practice size at different career stages. Younger dentists are more likely to be affiliated with a DSO than older dentists in most states and less likely to work as a solo practitioner than older dentists in every state.

In Nevada, the rate of DSO affiliation among dentists who graduated from dental school five or less years ago is the highest in the



country, at slightly more than 50%. Georgia has the highest percentage of DSO-affiliated dentists who are six to 10 years out of school, at about 27%.

“We continue to see major variation in practice modality across states,” Dr. Vujicic said. “Some states are seeing much more pronounced trends in this practice modality shift than other states.”

HPI’s analysis is based on all practicing dentists in the U.S. for whom the institute can assign at least one practice location address. This includes 191,669 dentists out of 202,401 practicing dentists.

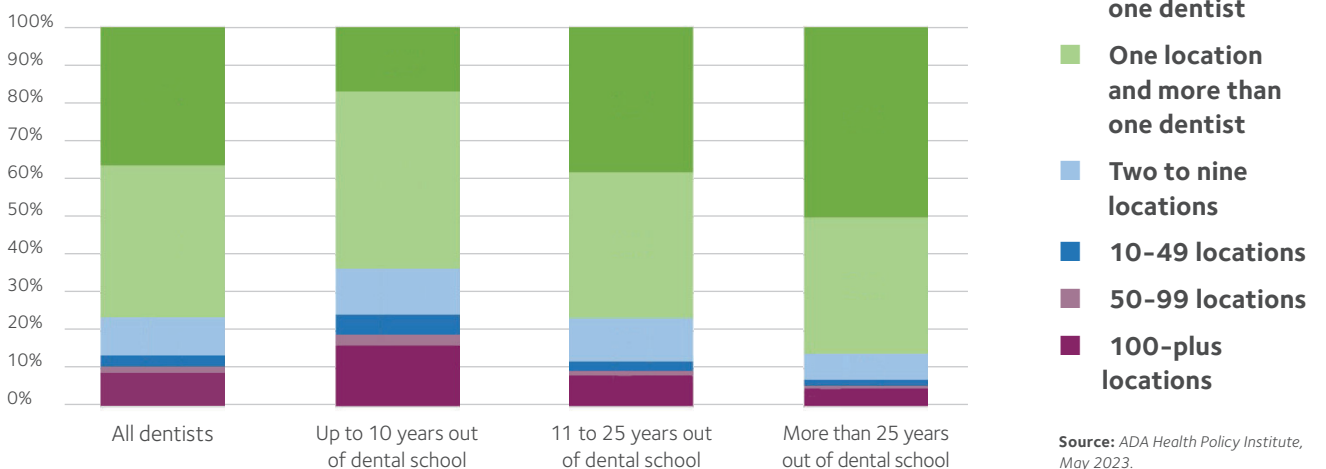
The HPI team continues its research into practice modality by examining how long dentists remain in a particular practice modality; whether there are differences across modalities in terms of career satisfaction, work-life balance, earnings and patient outcomes; and what role private equity plays in driving practice consolidation.

To view the full data set, visit ADA.org/HPI. ■

“Our data consistently show this, that early-career dentists are not practicing in typical models ...”

- Dr. Vujicic

Distribution of dentists by practice size and career stage



Source: ADA Health Policy Institute, May 2023.

More Than A Lab.

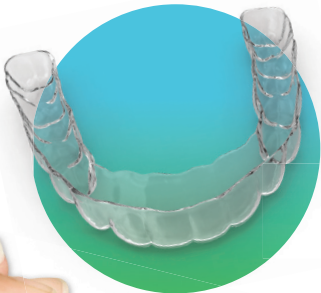
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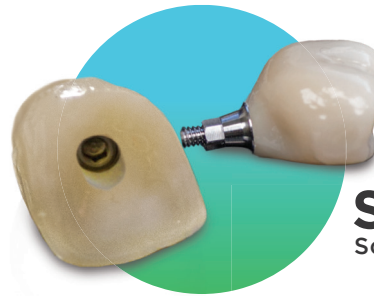
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