

TEN UNDER

10

For the third consecutive year, the JOURNAL OF THE MASSACHUSETTS DENTAL SOCIETY, in conjunction with the MDS Standing Committee on the New Dentist, is shining the spotlight on 10 member dentists who have been in the profession for 10 years or less—“The Ten Under 10.”

The honorees were surveyed about the many different and sometimes challenging aspects of the profession that the new dentist faces on a daily basis. These dentists have generously shared their experiences on everything from how to balance work and family, to the importance of gaining patients’—and colleagues’—trust, to the importance of staying involved in organized dentistry.

Congratulations to this year’s Ten Under 10—the future of professional dentistry.

To qualify for selection as a Ten Under 10, dentists must have graduated from dental school in the past 10 years and have made a significant contribution to the profession, their community, or organized dentistry. A call for nominations was sent to MDS member dentists in September (nominees are required to be current MDS members), and nominations were reviewed and final selections were chosen by the MDS Standing Committee on the New Dentist in December.



Brian P. Chuang, DMD, MSD

RESIDENCE: Somerville
OFFICE LOCATIONS: Peabody and Lynn
SPECIALTY: Endodontics
EDUCATION: Boston University School of Dental Medicine; National Institutes of Health, and Boston University School of Dental Medicine (MSD, CAGS)

Why did you choose dentistry as a career?

I have always liked working with my hands. Dentistry combines aspects of art and science, both of which interest me. I feel very fortunate that I am in this profession because I really enjoy being a dentist.

What was the biggest challenge/obstacle you experienced when you began your professional career?

Not having enough time in the day to do everything that I wanted to do.

What has been the biggest reward, professionally, personally, or both, that you have experienced since you left dental school?

The feeling that I really am helping others is the biggest reward. There's something very gratifying about being able to calm patients down and provide the treatment so that their dental health improves. Last week, one of my patients informed me that she wrote to the *Oprah Winfrey Show* to compliment me because

I completely changed her perspective about root canal treatment. She wants Oprah to tackle dental phobia on her show.

What advice would you give to a student graduating from dental school this year?

First, thank those people who helped you get to where you are in life. Second, give back to the community. During my residency, I founded and organized a conference, Advanced Programs in Clinical Endodontics Symposium (APICES), which is a three-day educational and social seminar for all endodontic residents in the United States and Canada. It took a lot of time to raise the funds for this symposium, but we were able to pay for the room and board for all 170 residents, representing approximately 30 endodontic programs in the country. APICES is now rotating throughout dental schools across the United States on an annual basis, and the American Association of Endodontists has become the official platform to ensure that this conference continues. I think that it's important to contribute back to dentistry.

How do you balance your professional and personal lives?

As new dentists starting out in our careers, we find that time seems to disappear very quickly, and there is not enough time to catch up in life. It is important to set aside time for ourselves, as well as for our friends and family.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I see myself continuing to take pleasure in being an endodontist. And hopefully, I will still be able to continue my hobby of songwriting. ■



Joy E. Kasparian-Federico, DMD

RESIDENCE: Weston
OFFICE LOCATION: Medford
SPECIALTY: Orthodontics
EDUCATION: Tufts University School of Dental Medicine (DMD and Certificate in Orthodontics)

Why did you choose dentistry as a career?

Initially, I was drawn to dentistry because my father was a dentist. I began working in his office during middle school, and those early recollections made a lasting impression. I was able to see first-hand how much my father loved his job. He derived tremendous satisfaction from making his patients look and feel better. He also enjoyed a nice balance between his work and family life. Those aspects of the dental profession still appeal to me. I love coming to work every day, treating patients, and having a positive impact on people's lives.

What was the biggest challenge/obstacle you experienced when you began your professional career?

I faced the challenge that I think all young dentists face: transitioning between a student practice and a professional practice. Orthodontic residents treat only a few patients a day, while most orthodontists often see 40 to 50 patients a day. Young dentists need to learn to practice efficiently, while continuing to provide excellent quality of care. Also, because orthodontists often treat young people, there is the additional challenge of learning to

convey treatment plans to both the patient as well as his or her parents.

What has been the biggest reward, professionally, personally, or both, that you have experienced since you left dental school?

Ultimately, the greatest reward I experience is enjoying my work. It is satisfying to improve my patients' occlusion (and hence their functionality) as well as their appearance.

What advice would you give to a student graduating from dental school this year?

I think it is important for young dentists to work in a practice where they have good mentors and where they will have significant responsibility for patient care. I have been fortunate to work with some very talented dentists who mentored me and helped me build my professional skills. After young dentists have established clinical proficiency, I would encourage them to begin building equity in a practice as soon as possible.

How do you balance your professional and personal lives?

I focus on my patients when I am at the office and I focus on personal matters when I am not at work. When emergencies arise, my patients' needs have to come first, and I am flexible in terms of my personal schedule.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I hope that I am continuing to build my orthodontic practice. I would also like to have the opportunity to teach and mentor dental students and young dentists as they move down the path toward fulfilling careers. ■



Polly Sue Nichols, DDS

RESIDENCE: South Lancaster
OFFICE LOCATION: South Lancaster
SPECIALTY: General Dentistry
EDUCATION: Loma Linda University

Why did you choose dentistry as a career?

I recognized the satisfaction that it afforded my father, and I realized that I am very much like him. We like to use our hands and we enjoy helping people. Being able to relieve pain and provide the lasting values of comfort, function, and esthetics is tremendously rewarding. Additionally, I wanted a profession that I could take with me anywhere in the world and be of service. I have not been disappointed.

What has been the biggest reward, professionally, personally, or both, that you have experienced since you left dental school?

For me, the greatest reward in dentistry is the trust of my patients. Another very nice moment was learning that one of the ethics articles I lead-authored had won a national dental journalism award.

What was the biggest challenge/obstacle you experienced when you began your professional career?

The most immediate frustration was my lack of clinical speed.

Everything seemed to take so long! But I have been blessed to be able to join my father's practice—a place where I have been personally and professionally nurtured.

What advice would you give to a student graduating from dental school this year?

The best advice I can offer is to find a dentist who will give freely of himself or herself to mentor you in the twin journeys of clinical and interpersonal excellence.

How do you balance your professional and personal lives?

I have tipped the balance in favor of my personal life in order to focus on my greatest priorities: my husband, Timothy, and our children, Summer Rose and Ethan. I see patients only two days per week and have streamlined other commitments that would interfere with my mothering responsibilities. For example, when Ethan was born I resigned from writing the ethics column in *General Dentistry*. Dentistry will always be with me, but my children will someday grow up and move away.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Still practicing on a limited scale with my dad and my brother (he joined us when he graduated LLU in 2005), teaching my children at home (prepping them for the Dental Admission Test!), and beginning to find time to reenter the world of dental ethics and/or dental education. ■



Lokesh Suri, DMD, MS

RESIDENCE: Boston
OFFICE LOCATION: Boston
SPECIALTY: Orthodontics
EDUCATION: Tufts University School of Dental Medicine; All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, India (Certificate in Prosthodontics)

Why did you choose dentistry as a career?

I always had a fascination for the arts and dabbled in oils as a youngster. I made a few portraits and found that trying to paint the teeth was the hardest part (and remains the most difficult for me even today). That was probably when I started to observe people's teeth. During my high school years, I spent a summer working at my uncle's multispecialty dental practice. I was exposed to everything from carving wax set-ups for dentures and try-ins to orthodontic adjustments and retainers. Each procedure was like a painting or piece of art in progress. The dexterity and detail that dentistry requires really appealed to me—it was the perfect mix of art and science.

What was the biggest challenge/obstacle you experienced when you began your professional career?

Time management. The challenge for me each day is to create my own time machine and handle activities that would squeeze 48 hours into 24 hours. Sometimes I succeed, and sometimes I do not.

What has been the biggest reward, professionally, personally, or both, that you have experienced since you left dental school?

If it were not for orthodontics I would not have met my wife, who is a fellow orthodontist. So that is the biggest reward personally. Professionally, the greatest reward has been gaining the gratitude and respect of the patients I treat.

What advice would you give to a student graduating from dental school this year?

My advice would be threefold: First, read contracts carefully and ensure that you reap the benefits of your education. Second, do not just draw on current knowledge; contribute to it so that you can evolve professionally. Then, share that knowledge with students and peers. Finally, commit to propelling the profession forward by being involved in a sphere of your choice—teaching, dental politics, or a very high-quality practice.

How do you balance your professional and personal lives?

Remember the time machine!

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I see myself in private practice working with newer techniques. By that time, nanotechnology will probably have found routine applications in dentistry. I also see myself in academia with students and some very significant research under way. ■



Viktoria P. Talebian, DMD

RESIDENCE: Swampscott
OFFICE LOCATION: Salem
SPECIALTY: Orthodontics
EDUCATION: Boston University
School of Dental Medicine
(DMD, CAGS in Orthodontics)

Why did you choose dentistry as a career?

Dentistry intrigued me because it gave me an opportunity to combine my artistic, expressive side with my practical, academic, science-minded side. Orthodontics has been a fantastic specialty because of my eager, youthful, and appreciative patient base. We really have an opportunity to make a difference in the quality of someone's life.

What was the biggest challenge/obstacle you experienced when you began your professional career?

It took me some time to figure out what direction I wanted to pursue. I loved academics, for the benefit of sharing what you know is powerful. For the first few years, I split my time between holding a faculty position at a dental school and working in private practice. The private practice experience has been challenging in a different way. It forces you to really examine who you are and what you believe in and how those values will translate into a practice philosophy that you can use to guide your treatment and interactions with patients, staff, and colleagues.



Lakshmi P. Thalanki, DMD, MS

RESIDENCE: Wellesley
OFFICE LOCATIONS:
Cambridge and Hudson
SPECIALTY: Orthodontics
EDUCATION: Boston University
School of Dental Medicine

Why did you choose dentistry as a career?

I always wanted to be a doctor and to help people improve their health. Dentistry was more appealing to me, as I could balance my professional and personal lives, yet still have an impact on people's lives.

What was the biggest challenge/obstacle you experienced when you began your professional career?

I purchased an existing practice within a year of graduating from my orthodontic program and while I was expecting my second child. The most challenging part was to balance my new practice and my personal life. It was also a great challenge to learn how to run the business end of a dental office, versus just practicing orthodontics. Learning how to interact with staff members much older than I am, with parents, and with referring dentists who were sometimes leery of such a young specialist, challenged me to be my best. I worked to provide both excellent results and a great experience to my patients to gain their confidence and support. All these experiences helped me tremendously when I bought my second practice, although each practice is different.

What has been the biggest reward, professionally, personally, or both, that you have experienced since you left dental school?

For me, the joy of marrying my husband and now raising our three children together is the ultimate reward. Especially as a mother, I feel I am able to connect with my families on a more personal level, understanding more readily some of the challenges they face, and hopefully this has made me a more caring and supportive clinician.

What advice would you give to a student graduating from dental school this year?

Try to figure out as early as you can what your core values are and how they will guide all that you do both personally and professionally. Then, try to surround yourself with a working environment that fosters those values and challenges you to be the best you can be on a daily basis.

How do you balance your professional and personal lives?

I feel that it is critical to have some outlet, whether it is a hobby, volunteering at a community service organization, or just an hour working out at the gym. It is important to have a perspective on the bigger picture of life and what you want out of it and to never let the details, the demands, and the overscheduling consume you.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I will still be a mom, a wife, and an orthodontist. Making a difference in the lives of others, whether being there for my kids at their soccer games or giving an adolescent patient the confidence to smile brightly—these are the things that are most meaningful. ■

What has been the biggest reward, professionally, personally, or both, that you have experienced since you left dental school?

I really enjoy when a patient who had been so embarrassed to smile before is happy with his or her smile and says, "I can't stop smiling now." It is very rewarding to give patients that self-confidence and self-esteem. It is nice to know that we dentists can make a difference in others' lives, one smile at a time.

What advice would you give to a student graduating from dental school this year?

Treat all your patients like your own self or like your own child. Always keep the patient's best interest in mind. Success will follow when you are honest and truthful. Never stop learning, always look for more ways to improve your knowledge, skill, and techniques. Be involved in organized dentistry and your community.

How do you balance your professional and personal lives?

I have a son (age 8) and a daughter (age 4) who help me to keep my focus on life. Good communication with your loved ones helps a lot to keep balance. Fortunately, I have a wonderful and supportive family who encourage me to achieve both personal and professional goals. The most important thing is to be happy and appreciative of what you have.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Professionally, I see my practice continuing to flourish, as I embrace new technology and keep my offices on the cutting edge with all the advances in orthodontics. I will continue to be more involved in the MDS and in academics. Personally, I see myself continuing to enjoy life with my family and friends. ■



Justine Tompkins, DMD

RESIDENCE: Burlington
OFFICE LOCATIONS: Concord (private practice on the weekends) and Hanscom Air Force Base (active duty working at the base clinic during the week)
SPECIALTY: General Dentistry
EDUCATION: Harvard School of Dental Medicine; United States Air Force (AEGD)

Why did you choose dentistry as a career?

I chose the field of dentistry because I love working with people, and, more importantly, I love helping people. I also enjoy working with my hands. Dentistry appealed to me because of the continuity of care I would have with patients and the prospect of treating a patient and his or her family for many, many years.

What has been the biggest reward, professionally, personally, or both, that you have experienced since you left dental school?

My biggest reward has been the individual impact I have on patients, whether calming an anxious patient, treating a child, or making someone want to smile again, as well as the impact each patient has on me. I learn something new from every case and every patient. I have enjoyed being part of organized dentistry. Also, I recently passed the fellowship examination for the AGD, and have applied for Fellowship status—a personal goal I have been looking forward to achieving.



Carlene Tsai, DMD

RESIDENCE: Reading
OFFICE LOCATIONS: Danvers and Salem
SPECIALTY: Endodontics
EDUCATION: Harvard School of Dental Medicine; University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

Why did you choose dentistry as a career?

I was initially drawn to dentistry because of my background in microbiology and the opportunity to treat patients on a personal level. Dentistry allows me to pursue the areas of skill and accomplishment that I value most. This includes the requirement for scrupulous attention to detail, the necessity of carefully controlling the environment, the challenge of problem solving each unique case, and the reward of helping patients. When addressing dental issues, one develops an awareness and appreciation for the fact that oral problems can affect people's overall health and well-being.

What was the biggest challenge/obstacle you experienced when you began your professional career?

Initially, the biggest challenge I had when I started to practice was being asked if I was old enough to practice. Being petite and having a young appearance surprised some of my patients. However, by introducing myself, diagnosing their problem, and projecting my interest in making their experience as pleasant and pain-free as possible, I alleviated their concerns.

What was the biggest challenge/obstacle you experienced when you began your professional career?

As with many of my colleagues, the biggest challenge I first faced in practice was building my speed and efficiency when performing dental procedures. Now my challenge is staying current with new techniques and materials, as well as expanding my skills and procedures.

What advice would you give to a student graduating from dental school this year?

Continuing education is the most important thing you can do for yourself. Take as many hands-on courses as you can, and definitely consider additional training, such as an AEGD or a specialty residency program. Also, keep in mind that patients vary from being completely relaxed to extremely nervous when at the dental office. Take the time to comfort and talk to the patient. This initial discussion will go a long way, both for your patient's comfort and for the ease with which you can perform a procedure.

How do you balance your professional and personal lives?

I try to keep my life balanced by staying active in my community, volunteering, going downtown to the theater and enjoying the city, and setting aside weekend time with my family. I also try my best to stay physically fit because I find when I work out regularly, I have more energy and am better able to face challenges.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I see myself practicing dentistry in a small community, being active with the MDS, and enjoying my family. ■

What has been the biggest reward, professionally, personally or both, that you experienced since you left dental school?

One of the reasons I chose endodontics was so that I could have the ability to relieve pain for patients who have been in acute discomfort. After a successful treatment, it is the patient's gratitude that makes the profession worthwhile and enjoyable for me.

What advice would you give to a student graduating from dental school this year?

Stay current with the latest literature and practices. In dental school, we were constantly introduced to new techniques and materials as we learned the art. However, in private practice it is easy to rely on what we've previously learned. It is important to be informed of the current research and to attend continuing education courses, as the practice of dentistry is constantly evolving.

How do you balance your professional and personal lives?

I've been fortunate to have a supportive husband who helps me balance work with caring for our 2-year-old daughter. I have learned that it is important to communicate priorities and respect each other's needs. This applies not only at home, but also working with staff in order to make the daily routine run as smoothly and efficiently as possible.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

I plan to continue to grow my practice and stay attuned to the latest clinical techniques. My hope is to continue to stay involved in organized dentistry and to play an active role in our local dental society. Finally, I'd like to give back to the education and foundation I have received by volunteering at Harvard School of Dental Medicine. ■



Eric Weinstock, DMD, JD

RESIDENCE: Needham
OFFICE LOCATION: Canton
SPECIALTY: Endodontics
EDUCATION: Tufts University School of Dental Medicine (DMD, Endodontics Certificate); University of Virginia School of Law (JD)

Why did you choose dentistry as a career?

Dentistry is a wonderful field. It affords me the unique opportunity to enjoy the various roles of healer, educator, and small business owner, all in a day's work.

What was the biggest challenge/obstacle you experienced when you began your professional career?

The biggest challenge was adjusting to the business aspects of starting a solo practice from scratch. I was fortunate to have great clinical training while at Tufts University School of Dental Medicine, but learning to manage my staff and handling the rigors of running a business, especially in the beginning, was my greatest challenge.

What has been the biggest reward, professionally, personally, or both, that you have experienced since you left dental school?

My biggest reward by far is that my wife and I are fortunate to

have had three beautiful children since I graduated from dental school. Starting my own practice and heading the ethics program at Tufts have both been extremely rewarding professionally, but being a dad three times over takes the cake.

What advice would you give to a student graduating from dental school this year?

The financial pressures facing new graduates are greater than ever. Despite these pressures, no matter in which direction a new graduate goes, whether it's academia, residency, or private practice, the integrity brought to each pursuit should never be compromised. What will set you apart in the eyes of your patients and your colleagues alike will be the ethical standards you abide by in the care you provide.

How do you balance your professional and personal lives?

One of dentistry's finest attributes is that it affords its practitioners the ability to balance their professional and personal lives. Few fields allow for such autonomy of practice. Learning to leave work issues at the office—which is easier said than done—allows for a much more fulfilling personal life.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

In addition to private practice and teaching ethics at Tufts, I will continue to explore opportunities in dental higher education and organized dentistry. ■



Janice Yanni, DMD

RESIDENCE: Longmeadow
OFFICE LOCATIONS: West Springfield, MA, and Ellington, CT
SPECIALTY: Orthodontics
EDUCATION: Case Western Reserve University; University of Pittsburgh (Certificate in Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics)

Why did you choose dentistry as a career?

I am the third member of my immediate family to choose dentistry as a career. After experiencing firsthand the rewarding impact dentistry had on my older siblings, I decided to apply for dental school. We all attended the same dental school and shared several professors and many challenges. I decided to further my dental education and chose orthodontics as a specialty. To me, there is no better profession. I treat both children and adults, and it is truly rewarding to see how a smile can transform someone's life.

What was the biggest challenge/obstacle you experienced when you began your professional career?

Upon graduating from my orthodontic residency in 2002, I decided to open up two private orthodontic practices. From an orthodontic perspective, I felt confident in my ability to straighten teeth. However, from a business perspective, did I have a lot to learn! It has been an exciting headache, from designing an office, to hiring staff, to growing a practice, and to managing a true business. The clinical aspect is the most rewarding and the business aspect is the most challenging.

What has been the biggest reward, professionally, personally, or both, that you have experienced since you left dental school?

The biggest rewards have been to be blessed with an amazing, supportive family and to have the ability to practice orthodontics. Dentistry and orthodontics are a long haul—financially and emotionally—and to have the support of loved ones throughout both the good and the bad times is invaluable. Orthodontics is such a rewarding profession. For a large percentage of my patients, I literally get to see them mature into young adults.

What advice would you give to a student graduating from dental school this year?

Pay more attention to those 8 a.m. business courses.

How do you balance your professional and personal lives?

That's the beauty about my specialty: I can live a balanced life quite easily. I have regular business hours and the nature of orthodontics does not have many emergencies. While my day is spent seeing a lot of patients, we truly have a great time. I am so fortunate to have such a wonderfully supportive husband and immediate family.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Where I am right now. While I would love to expand my private practices from two offices to four, I will never get too caught up. I strive with my staff to create a unique experience for my patients. No matter how many patients come through my doors, I make it a point to treat every single one of those patients. No matter how large my practice or practices become, I will always provide the personal and individualized attention my patients deserve. ■