

Dr. Arestea Kakaris

Dr. Arestea Kakaris owns her dental practice and has been working for over 35 years. She holds degrees from the University of Michigan and the University of Detroit. Dr. Kakaris has always wanted her own practice, and right after graduating from dental school, that's what she accomplished.

Dr. Kakaris believes in continued education for her practice, and says that dentistry is very dynamic.

“Continued education is really a big key as far as I'm concerned in order to be able to deliver the best care possible,” she says. “And we focus on our patients, because of the continued education and because of all the new things that come out, we tend to be on the forefront of that. We have lasers—we do laser dentistry—we do same-day crowns, we have a CT scan, a CDCT, we have digital x-rays, I mean, pretty much everything. We even have a digital way to track the joints so we can actually do the crowns and the bridges to the actual movement of the patient, not the generic calculation, but that it's very specific and very personalized for the patient. We have scanners, we don't do old impressions anymore, so everything is digital, everything is cleaner, everything is more precise.”

Dr. Kakaris has had the opportunity to travel to international symposiums and learn from other communities.

“We go to international symposiums because, basically, the U.S. has a certain philosophy and when you go outside of the U.S., you go to the European community, they have other philosophies, and I was always curious to see, are they converging? Diverging?” She explains. “The nice thing about that is a lot of the key speakers, and the people, the people that are really doing—the movers and the shakers—are international. So we're able to do international symposiums and continue education there. And then, you know, of course, when we go there, we go there in order to bring things back to the practice. It doesn't do any good if you just go and not utilize what you learn.”

She recalls something specific she brought back to her practice after traveling to Europe for a symposium.

“The European community sees the body as a whole, versus as segments” she explains. “Here in the U.S., we kind of have compartmentalized everything. We have a multitude of little specialties for everything, and then a lot of the time the specialties don't really speak to each other. In the European community, they have a more comprehensive model where the dental people are also in connection with the physicians. So you've got your dentists, you've got your physicians,

you've got your physical medicine people—they all kind of come together. I try to look at the person as a whole, and I think medicine should be comprehensive. I think the disciplines have to merge sometimes. As medicine progresses, so does dentistry. Our thinking is much broader now, which is great for the patient. We're seeing the patient as a whole. I think more and more dentists are starting to do that and more and more physicians are understanding the connection.”

During our interview, Dr. Kakaris shared her passion for being a dentist. She describes it as a mix of art and medicine.

“I mean, you can really change people's lives, right? You can have somebody smile again, you can instill confidence in them again. I think the smile is really underrated. And I think that's the beginning. If you smile, you feel better. That's the mind-body connection, right? So, if you don't like or if you're ashamed of your smile and you don't smile, then it's not as sunny in your mind, you know what I mean?” she explains. “So, that's the beauty of dentistry. I would do it all over again. I think it's an obsession. Sometimes, I just can't get enough.”

We discussed the rise of Artificial Intelligence and how it plays a role in her practice.

“We're able to actually teach the new dentists coming out. You know, we have all of these tools, and we have AI that can enhance their diagnostic skills. I mean, you're not going to use the computer for your diagnosis all the time, but it gives you another tool to expand that horizon, like 'oh, I didn't see that,' or 'oh, I didn't think about that.' I think it's amazing what we could do.” She continues, “It doesn't substitute for your clinical judgement. That's the part I think some people are missing. AI is just another tool, you know, it does not preclude you from being an expert in your field. It's just another tool that makes it a lot easier.”

Dr. Kakaris also highlighted her staff during the interview.

“The team is critical, of course. I think we have a great staff. Everybody is patient-oriented. We have our assistants, and a lot of our assistants want to become dentists and hygienists and that's the beauty of it—that they're interested,” she explains. “We're always looking to make people feel at home. We care, so we want to show that. We want people to feel comfortable. This is a place where you can go and everybody knows your name.” She also highlighted how her front desk upholds high customer service satisfaction and excels in speaking with patients.

Something special Dr. Kakaris highlighted is she has her son working alongside her.

“This is his fourth year. He had an opportunity to see dentistry. He basically grew up in the practice firsthand and now he's become very good. He's pretty astute. We're able to do a lot of

things because of him and he's my technological wizard. He introduces a lot of new ideas and it just keeps us growing."

Dr. Kakaris concludes that "everyday is a good day here" and truly loves her job.