Welcome to Inside News, Issue 1

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Making a Difference

Moving Beyond the Tragedy

TP Orthodontics, Japan

TP Orthodontics is distributed globally and recognizes excellence, progress, innovation and passion from practices around the globe. Each quarterly issue prints in multiple languages and looks at orthodontists—your lives, practices, staff and patients. In our first and opening issue, we are honored to feature orthodontists making a difference in their local communities. We also discuss the March tragedy with Banriku Ogawa, the President of TP Orthodontics, Inc. Japan Headquarters.

Banriku Ogawa
President of TP Orthodontics, Japan

Dr. Denise Swasty
Summerville, SC

Dr. Chad Wright
Santa Barbara, CA

Personalized Color-Matching Technology

Dr. Chad Wright shares with us about helping patients in Santa Barbara. Dr. Wright is a featured TP Orthodontics speaker at the AAO 111th Annual Session in May.
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HAVE SOMETHING TO SHARE?

Is your practice unique? Do you have tips to share with colleagues? Are you doing something extraordinary outside of the office? Or have you changed a patient’s life? Share your achievements with your peers around the globe. All submissions are responded to by the editor within five business days.

Contact us:
editor@tportho.com
480-559-9443 (fax)

TP Orthodontics, Japan

Moving Beyond the Tragedy.

On March 11, 2011 the devastating earthquake hit TPOJ’s (TP Orthodontics Japan) Tokyo headquarters. “None of us have ever experienced such a terrible quake and could have any idea how to deal with it. We were almost in panic,” recalls Banriku Ogawa, President of TPOJ. “All of our TPOJ staff provided equanimity, remained in order and did what they should and could do.” Fortunately no staff members were injured and when the quake subsided they left the office in groups for safety.

The earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disaster have all hit close to home for TPOJ with 30 staff members based in Tokyo and 1,100 customers in both Tokyo and surrounding areas. In spite of the harsh commute to work, TPOJ employees continue coming to the office to provide normal services to local customers.

“Planned rolling blackouts have been taking place,” Ogawa says. “Every time such an outage (occurs) trains and subways stop services and we have to walk between office and home.”

TPOJ was founded in December 1999. Ogawa relates that marketing and customer education have always been the main focus to meet each orthodontist’s needs. The Japanese market is quickly evolving with the rising patient demand for aesthetic orthodontics. “In Japan more ‘aesthetic’ products will attract attention most,” says Ogawa.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Readers looking to help support relief efforts in Japan are encouraged to contribute by contacting their local Red Cross office or by donating online at www.IFRC.org.
InVu Aesthetic Brackets feature
the natural tooth color to show.
long wavelengths of light, enabling only
has specially engineered optical

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would not be able to afford it and
offer her full orthodontic care.

We started our hunt for our pro
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flyer at a couple of local middle
schools for the school nurse. One
of our free treatment flyers ended
up in the hands of the visiting
hygienist who serves the schools of
the entire county. We had a couple
of meetings where we described the
ideal patient as someone who
financially would not be able to
afford treatment, had a great
treatment need, lived locally, would
be compliant with appointments
and instructions, and had caregivers
who also wanted treatment for their
child. Within a few weeks Carsa was
in our office for her new patient exam.

Carsa lives with her grandmother
and is on Medicaid. She has a great
compliance track record and due to
her crowded anterior teeth wasn’t a
big smiler. Unfortunately, her
crowding and Class II occlusion
were not enough to qualify her for
Medicaid coverage.

One month ago we started Carsa’s
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Hopefully, we will be able to bring
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A PERFECT MATCH FOR ANY PATIENT

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Biography

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Dr. Denise Swasty, Summerville, SC

Changing a Life Starts with a Smile.

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Dr. Chad Wright, Santa Barbara, CA

One Doctor’s Goal of Goodwill.

Sunshine, palm trees, surfing and convertibles. The land of million-dollar condos and five million-dollar yachts. They say Santa Barbara is America’s Riviera, but as is probably the case with most (if not all) resort-like communities, the appearance is not necessarily the reality. And certainly not true for the vast majority of my patients’ families. It’s not the “Santa Barbara Address” that keeps them here, as much as the hours of the time, and the basilion dollars it would cost to fill up the tank and drive to and from Ventura every six weeks for a slightly less expensive 20-minute adjustment.

Unfortunately it’s that “bit more cash” that so often puts orthodontics—and all of its social and dental health benefits—just out of reach for many Santa Barbarans. Granted, there are a few who drive to my office in their Escalades or Range Rovers and pay cash up front for braces. The average patient in my practice, however, probably looks and feels very much like the average patient in most practices: Stretched thin financially, working more than one job (or no job at all), affected in some way by the current economic Debbie and wishing they had a bigger checking balance and a smaller orthodontic payment.

Braces in Santa Barbara can certainly be on the expensive end of the spectrum. From the moment I came to town, I realized there was a large pool of potential patients who could not afford either the Santa Barbara fees or the time and expense of traveling out of town for cheaper treatment. They were instead just living with crooked teeth. Since I was already comfortable reducing my fee for some of my insurance plans, I began something I call my “Healthy Families Program.” It started small, but since grown into a significant part of my practice.

Together with my Treatment Coordinator and Office Manager, I came up with another “number.” This number is a bit higher than my original insurance “number,” but still lower than my regular fee for braces. We began by letting a few of the clinics in town know about our program and our discount for lower-income families. Over time these clinics have sent hundreds of patients in to see us who then ask about our Healthy Families discount. Most of these patients are able to get started, especially because we also significantly lower the down payment required to get started, as well as occasionally extend the payments up to six months beyond the estimated treatment length. My time is valuable, and my patients understand that. But they also understand that I really care about them. They understand my primary focus is to make them happy. I leave the money in the consult room. Once I have left the consult, a patient is a patient. I do not treat any patient differently than any other, regardless of how much they paid for their braces.

I have no doubt that my success in a difficult market is due in great part to our Healthy Families program. My goal is to create goodwill in my community through providing beautiful smiles to as many people as I can. There’s not much that compares to the feeling of fulfilling the dream of someone who never thought they could afford it. That’s good for my patients. It’s good for my staff and for me. And I’m pretty sure it’s good for Santa Barbara.

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