

Digital dentistry—the sky is the limit

Dr Shivi Gupta (Fig. 1) graduated in dentistry from the University of Manitoba, Canada in 2002. She completed a one-year advanced education in general dentistry residency at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio before moving to San Diego in 2004. After joining her current practice partner as an associate in 2010 in a newly founded practice, she became a partner in 2015. Dr Gupta conducted team trainings, attended continuing education courses and brought new services to the practice. She has always been interested in teaching others and sharing her knowledge on digital dentistry.

During the first DS World in Dubai from 5 to 6 February 2023 our editorial team had the chance to interview Dr Shivi Gupta on the topic of digital dentistry regarding her experiences in daily practice, patient reactions as well as its challenges and opportunities. As a mother of two, Dr Gupta also advocates for more females in dentistry and the beneficial balance between a professional career and family.



Fig. 1: San Diego dentist and digital dentistry specialist Dr Shivi Gupta.

Dr Gupta, you are an expert in digital dentistry and CAD/CAM technology, what kind of difficulties did you encounter introducing digital dentistry in your practice?

I decided to dive right in after adopting the technology. I was having good success but wanted to expand from doing single crowns into larger comprehensive cases with a digital workflow. I was able to make the leap by attending education courses as well as online learning. I found the more I immersed myself into learning about the technology, the more I could offer expanded treatment modalities.

How do you see digital dentistry impacting the workflow between the dentist and the dental technician?

The processes between practice and laboratory benefit extremely from digital technology. Just think of the intra-oral scan. There is no need for a cast model that has to be manually sent. By using DS Core the scans are automatically uploaded to the cloud and can be sent to any partner together with annotations. Everything is much more direct and faster. We can communicate better and quicker, allowing us to focus on what we do best. In addition, the same high-quality restorations can be repeated multiple times. This means that not only we in practices and labs benefit, but above all the patient.

How do you convince your patients to accept for example an intra-oral scan instead of an analogue method? And how does, in your opinion, the use of digital technology in dentistry improve the patient experience?

I honestly do not have to convince my patients because they come to me knowing exactly that they will be treated with state-of-the-art technology. Concerning the patient experience: You certainly do not go to the dentist to stay there for long. Everyone is happy when the needed things are done quickly and in a high quality. And I can achieve that with digital dentistry. My patients know and appreciate that. And just in case, I can show them the imagery easily on the digital cloud platform.

How does computer-aided design and manufacturing technology play a role in guided dental implantology?

CAD/CAM technology has played an important role in guided implant dentistry for a very long time, just think of CEREC Guide, which was introduced ten years ago. Let us not forget that with today's technology, one can also print surgical guides for a patient's implant placement.

In your opinion, why are there still relatively few women in this field of dental surgery? Could it be that they are expected to balance family and work responsibilities?

When we look at leadership positions and at training facilities, it is predominantly male leaders and mentors. But I believe a shift is coming. In the US, we have now more women graduating dental schools. I think it's the same in Europe, and perhaps in other parts of the world. Therefore, it's important to support this momentum and give female dentists a platform to show young dentists that living a balanced life is possible. When young women see that there are female dentists who are passionate about their profession and their families, and are successful in their dental careers, it does something to them. They should all have ambitious goals and be able to achieve them, but having

relatable role models is also equally important. The sky is the limit—that is what I believe and tell young professionals.

How can mentorship and networking opportunities be made more accessible to women in surgical dentistry or can you discuss any current initiatives or programmes that promote gender diversity and inclusion within surgical dentistry?

In my opinion, we women in dentistry can do a lot for each other. As mentors, as role models, as friends. I encourage my peers to proactively join local organisations or associations, and fiercely advocate for programmes and opportunities that inspire, uplift, and support young female dentists and students within their community. If you find yourself thinking sometimes, "Oh, it would be great if we have something like this or that"—then turn that thought into action.

On a similar note, I am a proud partner of Dentsply Sirona and have been working with the company for many years. One of the main advantages is I am able to collaborate with the company on certain programmes specifically for women. An example is "FirstTo50", Dentsply Sirona's Global Women Speaker Development Program. It was launched in 2022 with the aim to help develop female dentists' public speaking and presentation skills. The programme includes online sessions with a professional coach, and I believe it was truly valuable when I prepared for my mainstage presentation in the previous DS World in Las Vegas. We need more women on the podium and FirstTo50 is a fantastic boost to make that happen (Fig. 2).

What development potential do you see in digitised dentistry, especially regarding CAD/CAM technology? What could become even better, simpler and more intelligent in the next years?

I think we are kind of moving towards more printing—and that can open a lot of possibilities! It is not about making the lab redundant; it is about having a quicker turnaround for our patients. I am a big SureSmile provider, and while having a digital lab already enables me to have an efficient turnaround, perhaps in the future by being able to print the first two aligners, then I could imagine a patient could start immediately! Moreover, it would be really nice if all of the different platforms could work on a universal platform. I think we are already on the path to make that happen and that makes dentistry such an exciting passion!

Thank you for the interview, Dr Gupta.



Fig. 2: Dr Shivi Gupta at the Dentsply Sirona World in Dubai.



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