

Dr. Michael Apa

by Kyle Patton, associate editor, *Dentaltown* magazine
Photography by Sean Micah Co.

Dentists spend most of their waking hours in their practices, so they usually don't get many opportunities to see what it's like inside another doctor's office. *Dentaltown* magazine's recurring Office Visit profile offers a chance for Townies to meet their peers, hear their stories and get a sense of their practice protocols.

In this issue, we introduce Dr. Michael Apa, a Manhattan dentist who's made a name for himself as a renowned cosmetic dentist with an impressive celebrity patient list (perhaps most notably the royal family of Dubai in the United Arab Emirates). Apa splits his time between practices in New York City and Dubai, lecturing, and promoting Apa Beauty, his line of oral care and beauty products.

OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS

Name and credentials:

Michael Apa, DDS

Graduated from:

NYU College of Dentistry

Practice name:

Rosenthal Apa Group,
New York City
Apa Aesthetic Dental and
Cosmetic Centre, Dubai, United
Arab Emirates

Practice size:

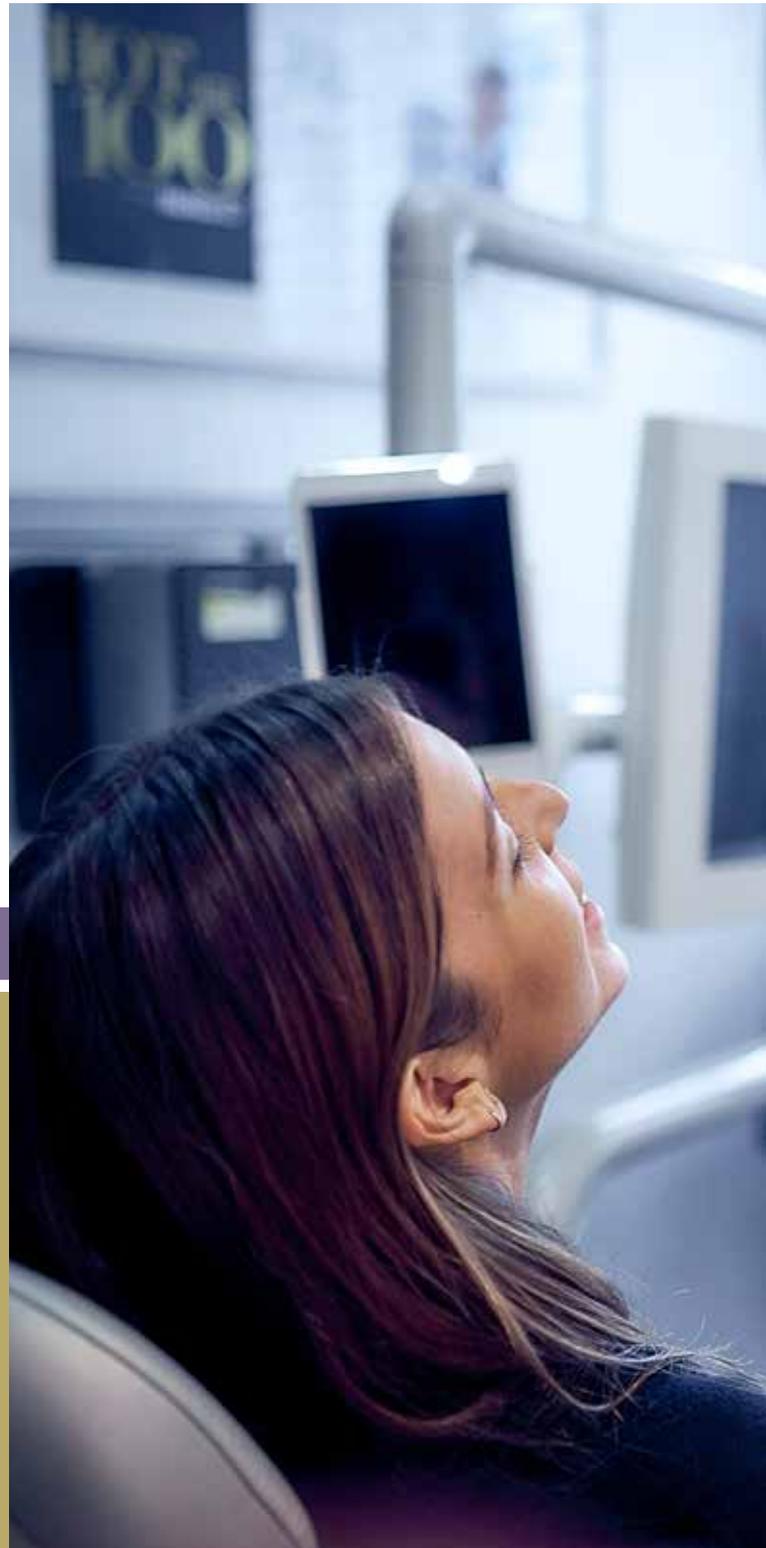
New York:
2,500 square feet
Dubai:
5,000 square feet

Staff:

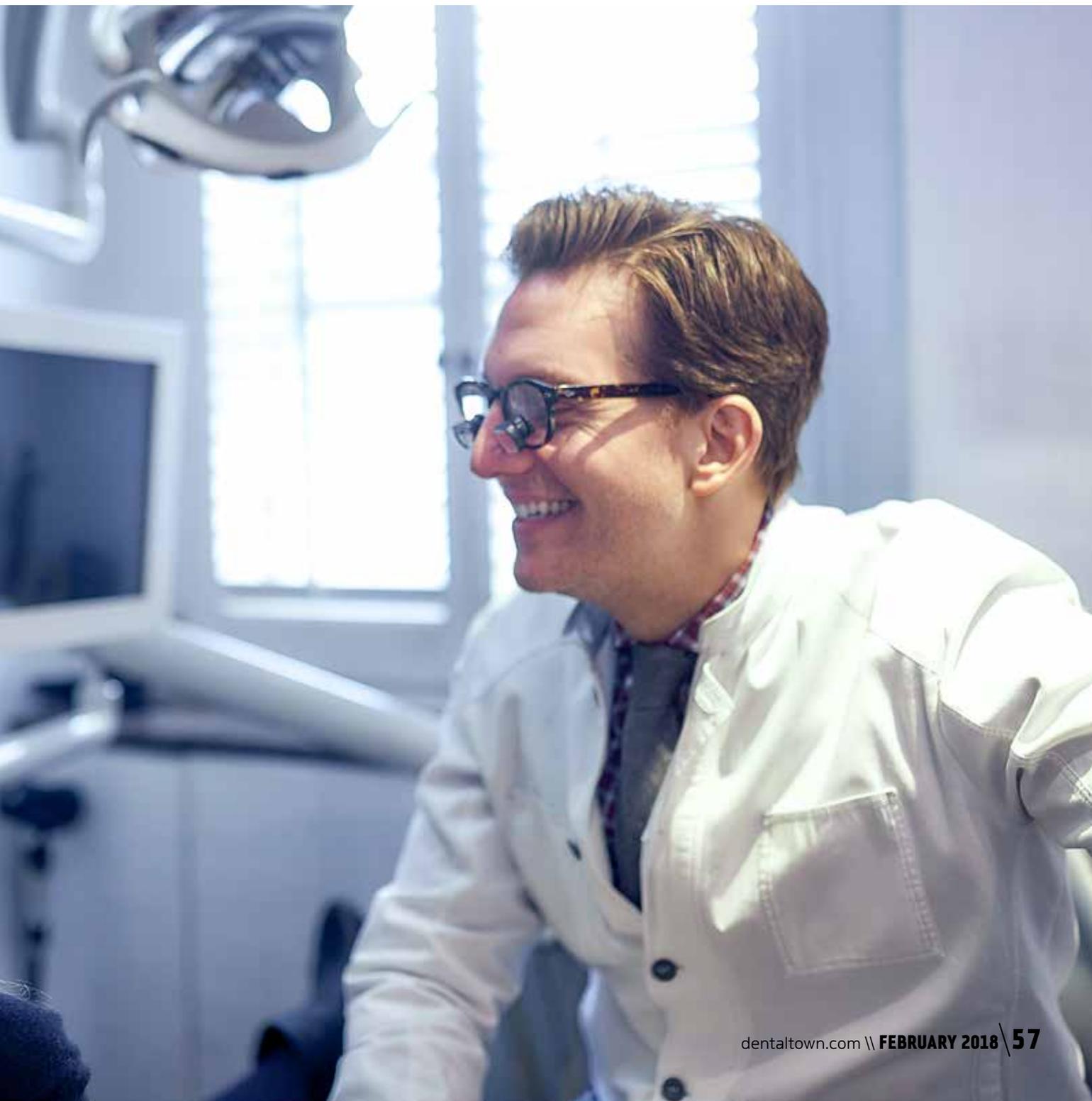
Eleven

Website:

rosenthalapa.com
apaaesthetic.ae



AACD award-winning cosmetic dentist delivers aesthetics on two continents





What was the path that led you to dentistry?

It was always in my head, even as a child, that I wanted to be a dentist. Nothing seems to make perfect sense as to why I thought this. When I was 5 years old, I wanted to be a pediatrician, but then I got really

sick and saw what my doctor went through—dealing with my parents at all hours of the night—and from that point forward, my decision changed.

Dentistry seemed to check the boxes as to how I thought I wanted to live my life. It stuck with me and I focused on dentistry being my career. (It was also an easy way to answer my parents, guidance counselors, etc., when they would ask what I wanted to do.)

During my high school's career day, I followed my local dentist. At that point it got serious for me, and I was starting to understand that I actually *did* want to do it. That day, my dentist gave me audiotapes of a guy named Dr. Larry Rosenthal.

He told me, "Michael, I'm not sure what area of dentistry

you're interested in, but there is something called cosmetic dentistry that's really exciting and new. ... Listen to this guy's tape. He's creating the landscape!" Well, I listened to that tape and was hooked; I knew I wanted to do cosmetic dentistry. More importantly, I knew I wanted to work for Dr. Rosenthal.

Many things happened from there but essentially, I was determined to become Dr. Rosenthal's associate. Then, when I worked there, I was determined to become his partner, and then to own the practice someday. It's all about having real focus on what you want.

You treat the royal family of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Dubai. How did that start? Has it led to other opportunities?

I treat the royal families of many countries, the United Arab Emirates being just one of them. The opportunity to create something in Dubai happened from when I treated members of the royal family in Abu Dhabi. They had come to see me in New York and I had become very close with them, which opened the door for me to be able to go to Dubai, see what was there and decide if it made sense to have a practice there.

This all happened when I was 29 years old. Looking back, I had nothing to worry about and no sense of failure. Nothing



scared me—not that it does now, but back then I was a young, single guy with not much worry.

How does the average day of practicing in Dubai compare with when you're practicing in New York? Are there any challenges, differences or details that stood out to you when you began working there?

Not really—I'm not like that. I've never acted differently in the UAE than I do when I'm in New York. In fact, my idea was to

treat them all the same—to give the same experience in Dubai. When patients from the Middle East or Europe would fly to me in New York, they loved the energy, so I tried to bring that same energy and excitement to them in Dubai. It worked! I was different from what they were used to, and all of a sudden I had created an office that people wanted to tell others about.

I remember being at a party in Dubai and overheard someone talking about how they couldn't wait to go "Apa's clinic." I heard them describing it as a place someone brags about being able to go to—it was unique.

The New York clinic is the same way. We've always instituted the "red rope theory," where we really don't let everyone in. We choose who we want to treat and the types of cases we want to take on. Because the space is small, we don't accept general dental patients who are looking for hygiene, checkups and fillings. It's an atmosphere where we love treating our patients, and our patients feel good being there.



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What has been the most rewarding part of having such a high-profile patient list?

"Celebrity patient" is such a cliché. "Celebrity dentist" is even worse. I don't think of it like that. We treat people—they just happen to be amazing, and each one different. The amazing part is listening to our patients' lives and hearing their journeys. Collectively, they are heads in art, fashion, business, politics, sports, comedy, theater, movies, music and government! So I learn from them as much as I can. I'm also blessed that I can pick up a phone

and pretty much do just about anything I can think up in the world by reaching out to a patient.

On top of the AACD's award for outstanding cosmetic dentistry, you're also a recipient of a prestigious award for hospitality. You seem to have mastered the clinical and business side of running a practice and created what you call a "seamless client experience." What have been your keys to running your practices?

You really learn as you go. I've always come from a place of passion and inspiration, but I've learned that sometimes that's not enough. You really need to have the right people first—people who want to be there, who are inspired by their work and who believe in the vision. I'm also learning that your team needs to feel that they, collectively and individually, make a difference. Finally, I see how important it is for the team to have my time and energy personally. As I've worked on this, we've always had systems in place to ensure we deliver the same experience for every patient. But it takes a group effort to see it continue day to day.

What has working with Dr. Larry Rosenthal been like?

Amazing. Larry has been a mentor and a best friend. We laugh all day, but we work hard. When I first started working there 15 years ago, it was much different. ... I was young and green, while he was the king. Larry was different—dentistry was





different! So much has changed, and like a good marriage, over time we've continued to click, and to adapt to our current positions.

Tell us about your involvement at NYU and the program you started there.

It was the first undergraduate aesthetic dentistry study club. When I started it, I had it partially sponsored by the AACD and brought some of the most prominent speakers to dental students at 7 in the morning. We had speakers like Larry, Dennis Tarnow gave a five-part lecture, top ceramists, Ray Bertolotti on bonding, etc. It was amazing. Since then it's grown and now has annual symposiums, where I always volunteer my time. In fact, this year, the entire Apa team from Dubai and New York will be lecturing for it.

Along with traveling back and forth between New York and Dubai, treating celebrities and royal family members, speaking and teaching, you've also created a line of "oral cosmetics," including your own brand of toothpaste, mouth rinse, lip loofahs, tooth gloss, lip shine, gum gel and more. What was the clinical process to bringing these products to market?

TOP PRODUCTS

<p>1. LuxaFlow Ultra (DMG America) to add and design tooth shapes in the temporaries.</p> <p>2. Luxatemp Ultra (DMG America) to fabricate temporaries.</p> <p>3. BlueWhite FG Diamonds Composite Finishing</p>	<p>Diamond Ultra Fine 8960185 (Henry Schein) to polish temporaries.</p> <p>4. Impregum Penta Heavy Body and Impregum Garant Light Body Impression Material (3M)</p> <p>5. Expasyl Temporary Gingival Retraction Paste (Kerr)</p>
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It's really a third job. Together with a partner, we financed it ourselves, which becomes a strong motivator. It was started with the idea that dental products don't have to feel so "dental"—I created these to get people to think about taking care of their teeth the same way they take care of their skin. The smile has to be brought into the beauty conversation along with the health conversation. So we focused on clinically effective formulas that felt rich, smelled good and items that allowed you to enjoy the experience. We also focused on making luxe packaging—something that changes the experience of how people perceive taking care of their teeth.

What's your typical day at the practice like?

Despite what I mentioned earlier about the experience being the same in both New York and Dubai, my schedules are different in each city. In the former, I try to have one prep in the morning and one in the afternoon, with an insert between. New patients side-booked and hygiene checkups throughout. Although it sounds nice, it's never that predictable. Some days it's absolute chaos, and others have a much more even rhythm.

In Dubai, because I go every two weeks for four working days, it's much more intense. We've had days where I've prepped



OTHER PRODUCTS

Adhesives and bonding agents

OptiBond Solo Plus from Kerr

Burs

Brasseler

Chair

Pelton & Crane Model SCT 30

Cements

- Fugicem 2 Automix from GC America
- NX3 Universal Adhesive Cement from Kerr
- MaxCem Elite Self-Etch/Self-Adhesive Resin Cement from Kerr

Handpiece

W&H Synea 500 Series

Patient financing

Care Credit

Practice management

Dentrix G6

Restoratives

IPS Empress Direct Composite from Ivoclar Vivadent

Technology

Picasso Lite 2.5-watt laser from AMD

and inserted 100 teeth in a day. It's a lot. The hours are whatever it takes. We start at 8 a.m. and go until the day is done.

What's an aspect of dentistry that never ceases to amaze you?

The negativity between colleagues. We really need to stand united—not take it personally when one patient leaves and goes to someone else, not criticize another's work—and build the community instead of

knocking it down. Even in the education, it's very elitist and I don't like it. Just being honest. We're all passionate or we wouldn't be doing it, but we need to be more respectful of others' ways, even if we don't understand.

What's the greatest advancement in aesthetic dentistry you've seen in your tenure?

Digital cameras. I'm still pretty old school with most of the "tools" available

to us, simply because they don't work in my workflow as well as what I'm using. For instance, digital scanners—we have one, but I never use it.

Give us a snapshot of your life outside of dentistry.

I enjoy spending time with my wife—and my friends when I can. I enjoy working out, playing tennis and I love a good Netflix series. I enjoy my cars a lot, too. ■

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