

*How the Scottsdale Center for Dentistry evolved from a simple vision to one of the top post-grad educational facilities in the profession*

*Something incredible is happening in dental continuing education (CE). Dr. Gordon J. Christensen accepted the position of dean at the Scottsdale Center for Dentistry in Scottsdale, Arizona, and he has recruited a faculty of the top names in dental CE; including Frank Spear, Cliff Ruddie, Harald Heymann, Vince Kokich, and Terry Tanaka, among others. Why have all these dentistry leaders joined together? What is it about this organization that's creating such a buzz in the profession? Dentaltown Magazine recently interviewed Scottsdale Center CEO Imtiaz Manji, and Dean of the Scottsdale Center Gordon Christensen, to find out.*

**First of all – what is the Scottsdale Center for Dentistry?**

**Manji:** It is a post-graduation learning center for dentists that provides the highest quality dental continuing education in an environment that was designed specifically to support learning at its highest level.

It is also the culmination of a long-standing dream of ours to provide a venue for dental education that would change dentistry for the better. After suffering the loss of my wife, I was compelled to put the full force of my energy behind a concept that would positively impact a profession that is near and dear to my heart. Five years and \$55 million later, with the incredible support of my partners, we have the Scottsdale Center for Dentistry – and anyone who has been here can tell you, there is nothing else like it in dental CE.

**Imtiaz, you're the CEO of both Mercer and the Center. Is there any overlap between these two companies?**

**Manji:** There is some overlap of ownership but the Scottsdale Center is completely independent with its own board of directors and its own economics. We think the Scottsdale



*Auditorium*



*Amphitheater*



*The Scottsdale Center for Dentistry  
CEO Imtiaz Manji and Dean Dr.  
Gordon Christensen.*



# Center



Training Lab

Center is second to none in the quality of its clinical education and we think Mercer Advisors, Mastery and Transitions is second to none in practice and financial management. If a client wants to experience a totally integrated approach to dentistry, he or she is welcome to participate, but it's an individual choice.

## **Dr. Christensen, how did you become the dean of Scottsdale Center?**

**Christensen:** Dentistry was once the most trusted profession in the country and I think there is a real need for ethical, pragmatic post-graduation education to help restore the position dentistry once had.

I've known Imtiaz for many years and when he shared with me his vision for the Scottsdale Center to provide comprehensive, evidence-based, patient-centered education, I realized this is just what the profession needed at this time and I decided to accept his invitation to consult on the project. I worked with him for more than a year advising on everything from physical layout to philosophy, faculty and curriculum.

But what emerged as I worked with him was a total alignment about how the Scottsdale Center would look, behave and operate; its mission, vision and values; and how it would contribute to dentistry. It seemed to me to be very exciting and worthwhile. At one meeting when we were discussing the need for a dean and what that person's responsibilities would be, Imtiaz looked at me and asked, "Gordon, why wouldn't you do this?"

Anyone who knows me knows how I value independence, but I also value the profession. I know that dentistry needs the Scottsdale Center. After a couple of weeks of reflection, my heart told me to take the position because this is where I believe I can make the greatest contribution to the profession, and where I can make the most difference.

## **How did you attract such a top-notch faculty for the Scottsdale Center?**

**Christensen:** Once they toured the Scottsdale Center and learned what it stood for, they were actually eager to

*"My reason for joining the Scottsdale Center is very simple: it represents everything I'm looking for in future continuing education. I want to be a part of this new initiative because it is committed to a high level of profession ethics and devoted to clinical excellence. And what's really important to me is that the message is untainted by excessive commercialism."*

*-Harald Heymann, DDS, MEd*



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be a part of it. The interest was certainly not for financial reasons. They are all very successful people. They see this as an opportunity to be part of a movement to provide evidence-based, patient-centered, broad-based, comprehensive education at moderate tuition in a world-class facility. In fact, of everyone I contacted to join, only one person turned down the opportunity and that was because of previous commitments.

### Was it difficult to get these educators to work together?

**Christensen:** No. In fact I was happy to find that when we all met for our first roundtable discussion there was an incredible degree of alignment. We all agreed on the current status of dentistry, and we saw eye to eye on how to fulfill the real need to provide excellent and trustworthy post-graduate education.

**Manji:** I think that alignment has a lot to do with the integrity of the instructors and the purity of the Scottsdale Center vision.

### How many faculty members are there and how many courses do you offer?

**Christensen:** We have 18 departments with 19 departmental directors or co-directors and they are all teachers. In addition, we have 12 instructors who are not department heads, so right now there are 31 faculty members and we plan to add another 15 or so. We have around 80 courses scheduled so far that cover all the major areas of dentistry.

### Not only is your staff impressive, but so is the facility itself. Can you tell our readers a little about it?

**Manji:** It's a 65,000-square-foot, \$55 million facility with state-of-the-art equipment and technology. It was designed by Gensler, one of the world's finest architectural firms. We started building in December 2005, and had our grand opening in April 2007. We have a 278-seat, stadium-style auditorium, an 80-seat lecture room, 36 lab benches, 10 fully equipped operatories, and a fully functional six-operatorial dental practice built to showcase ideal design. I hope your readers will come and see us or visit our Web site and see for themselves what an amazing place this is.

### Why did you locate the center in Scottsdale?

**Manji:** It was a combination of reasons. We wanted somewhere very central with good transportation links. Good weather was a big consideration. We also wanted to locate it in a place with good shopping and recreational facilities where dentists could bring their families for working holidays. Scottsdale fills all those needs so it is an ideal location for us.

### What makes the Scottsdale Center different from other continuing education destinations?

**Christensen:** Several things. One is our philosophy of offering unbiased education. It is an unfortunate fact of post-graduate dental education today that many courses are financially connected to specific companies, products or services and we don't believe that serves the best interests of practitioners.

Another is our comprehensive approach. With 18 departments representing every area of dentistry, we are unmatched for the scope of education we offer; and this education is for everyone. If you want to create a high-end aesthetic practice, we have courses taught by the best aesthetic dentists in the country. If you're in a family practice offering everyday dentistry and you want to enhance your skills and improve the quality of service to patients, this is the place for you. We have courses to suit every need and level of clinical skill, and we are completely non-judgmental. This is a very safe environment created for one purpose – to learn.

I would have to include the faculty in this answer. The people who teach here are known leaders in their fields. They are the finest and most trusted clinicians in dentistry. In my view there is no other faculty like it.

And of course the facility itself is probably the best of its kind in the world. It's a perfect environment for learning and the amenities for dining and interacting socially are first class. This really is the best way to experience clinical education.

### How does accepting this position affect Practical Clinical Courses (PCC) and your work with Clinical Research Associates (CRA)?

**Christensen:** I will be teaching the same courses that I did for PCC but it will be here at the Scottsdale Center. I will continue to



Lounge

*"I consider being invited to join the faculty at the Scottsdale Center as one of the highest honors I have received in my dental career. I feel privileged to join with some of the finest clinical educators across every discipline in dentistry, all of whom share a common vision of providing quality, unbiased clinical education in a learning environment truly unmatched anywhere in the world."*

—Clifford J. Ruddle, DDS



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produce CDs and DVDs, and in fact there will now be even more produced, including educational DVDs by our faculty. I will continue in my role as a senior consultant for CRA. Overall, things will continue very much as they are now.

### **Can you tell us something about the Fellowship Program? What is it and what is the concept behind it?**

**Christensen:** The Fellowship Program is a two-year continuum of clinical courses covering every major discipline, and I think it's one of the most exciting post-graduate opportunities in dentistry. There really is nothing else like it. The concept behind it is simple. Like all dentists I get stacks of material promoting hundreds of programs and they are mostly "show and tell" courses that are very uninteresting to me.

I started thinking, "What kind of program would it take to capture my interest and enthusiasm? What would a course be like that I would actually like to take myself?" and the idea of the Fellowship Program began to take shape.

It's a particularly timely program. Dentistry is changing so fast it's extremely difficult for practitioners to stay up to date. With so many CE offerings, it's very difficult today for practitioners to choose the courses that will most benefit their practices and their patients.

The Fellowship Program is a really wonderful way around that. It offers comprehensive, multi-disciplinary education taught by some of the best clinicians in the world. It delivers current, broad-based clinical and management education that is both concise and pragmatic.

This program is designed for both the new and established dentist as well as the specialist working with a cadre of referring dentists. All will come away from this program with a broad understanding of our profession, a better ability to work with each other, and enhanced treatment options.

### **How does the Fellowship Program work and what courses are being taught?**

**Christensen:** The program is 20 days of continuing education delivered in 10 two-day sessions at the Scottsdale Center. You attend five sessions per year. There are also 24 Web-based seminars (Webinars), which are interactive, online education opportunities delivered once per month. Each Webinar is 30 minutes of clinical or practice enhancement instruction followed by a 30-minute question-and-answer period.

The courses and Webinars are taught by expert faculty and cover diagnosis and treatment planning, aesthetics, endodontics, prosthodontics, occlusion, oral surgery, periodontics, and more. As I said, there are 20 one-day courses covering every major area of dentistry. It's the most comprehensive program available at this time.

### **Dr. Christensen, what is your involvement in the Fellowship Program and how does it fit into the curriculum of the Scottsdale Center?**

**Christensen:** I teach the practice vision and management course along with Dr. Glen Wysel and Imtiaz. That's a two-day commitment. I also teach a one-day course on implant prosthodontics and I am the moderator for all the courses. I attend each one, provide continuity for all the different disciplines and I teach how to integrate that new knowledge into everyday practice.

Everyone is welcome to participate in post-graduate education at the Scottsdale Center and to participate at whichever level they choose. But we suggest that the Fellowship Program is the ideal way to start.

*It is the mission of the Scottsdale Center for Dentistry to be widely regarded as the premium, most trusted and most respected CE center in the world. With the appointment of Gordon J. Christensen as the dean, a faculty where each member is a leader in his or her field and a scheduled program of some 80 courses covering every discipline in dentistry, it looks like that vision will soon be a reality – a view borne out by the attendance figures for programs so far. They are already expanding the facility to meet demand. ■*

*For more information on the Scottsdale Center and its programs, please call 866-781-0072 or visit [www.scottsdalecenter.com](http://www.scottsdalecenter.com).*

*"I had several reasons for wanting to teach at the Scottsdale Center. The facility itself is like nothing I've ever seen. I know Gordon would want only the absolute best clinicians on the faculty and I wanted to be associated with that. This is an opportunity to teach a lot of dentists, and if we can teach them to do procedures predictably, it's going to make quality dentistry more affordable and more accessible to the public. Finally, I am excited by the ethics and philosophy at the Scottsdale Center. We have the freedom and responsibility to teach evidence-based dentistry at the highest level we can. I really believe the Scottsdale Center has the potential to become a leader in post-graduation clinical education."*

*-Joseph J. Massad, DDS*

