

“Patient Friendly Dentistry” to the Rescue

by Krista Houstoun
Assistant Editor, *Dentaltown Magazine*

On top of owning Afdent, the largest solely owned one-building practice in America, which sees more than 500 new patients each month and prides itself on its Patient Friendly Dentistry practice philosophy, Dr. Roger Pecina is also an avid crusader against corporate dentistry. Herein, we talk with Dr. Pecina about Afdent's enormous success and his current plan to create an Afdent franchise model – a model that will encourage private practice ownership and, you guessed it, defy corporate dentistry.



First off, what drew you to dentistry?

Pecina: Growing up in an alcoholic, dysfunctional, uneducated family, I was always trying to fix my parents. They chose not to listen. The best thing about dentistry is that people will actually listen to your opinion and do what you say. Not only that but they pay you for it, too!

You currently have the largest solely owned one-building practice in America. Can you give us an idea of just how big the practice is?

Pecina: My building is 12,000 square feet with 28 patient care rooms and employs 85 people. We see more than 500 new patients per month with revenues of approximately \$14 million per year.



Photography by Brian Rodgers Jr. at Firevine Advertising and Design

Name: Dr. Roger Pecina

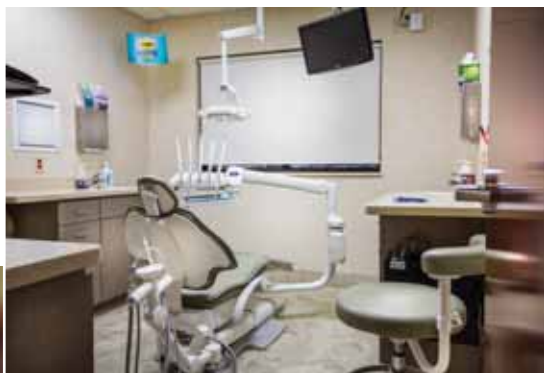
Graduate From: Indiana University School of Dentistry in 1977

Practice Location: Mishawaka, Indiana

Practice Size: 28 patient care rooms

Staff: 85

Website: www.afdent.com



Office Highlights

Bonding Agents

- OptiBond
- OptiBond Solo

Burs

- Alpen
- Axis
- Midwest
- Premier Solo

Cements

- Clearfil SE
- Fuji Plus Glass Ionomer
- RelyX Unicem

Impression Materials

- EXAFLEX HVP

Patient Financing

- Afdent Advantage in-house financing
- CareCredit
- Wells Fargo

Restorative

- SDI Amalgam
- Tetric EvoCeram
- Tetric Flow
- Venus Diamond

Technology

- E-Woo CT Scan Machine
- Gendex Sensors
- NOMAD Pro
- QSDental practice management software
- Vatech Primo Pan



Afdent Mishawaka building

Photo Courtesy of Firevine Advertising and Design

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Left: Financing options are discussed to best meet a patient's needs. Below right: Dr. Pecina's daughter, Allison, has worked alongside her dad for over 15 years. Below left: Dr. Pecina with a patient.

What is Afdent's practice philosophy?

Pecina: Patient Friendly Dentistry, which means meeting patients where they are at in this time in their lives; giving them what they want, right now, and helping them to afford it, while working with all different situations and economic conditions. If patients are in pain, wish to improve their oral health, or feel the need to improve their appearance, my practice must gear our services toward what is best for the patients, what *they* want and what *they* can afford. It is all part of getting on their level, understanding their situation and respecting it.

What makes the Afdent model so successful?

Pecina: A commitment to the cause. Our employees must align themselves totally behind the reason we are there: to treat people, not teeth.

How has the economy affected your practices?

Pecina: It hasn't at all. We are up over 30 percent since 2009 and have not raised fees in four years.

You recently received the Individual Philanthropist of the Year Award from the AFP Michiana Chapter for a significant contribution made to the Indiana University Dental School system. Why is giving back to your profession an important part of your life?

Pecina: I wouldn't have anything if not for my education. It has afforded me countless opportunities to serve. Being in health care is a privilege. I want everyone who has that dream to have every chance to get the best education possible.



What do you think is the biggest problem dentistry faces today?

Pecina: Itself. We keep doing the same thing. The problems that exist today are our fault. There is no real leadership or policing mechanism to ensure patients are treated with respect and fairness.

You sent out a press release recently with the headline, "Dental Industry Leader Vows To Lead Crusade Against Corporate Dentistry." What is it about corporate dentistry that you dislike?

Pecina: "Quota-based dentistry" just nauseates me. We have to stop worrying about production and remember why we got into this – to change people's lives. The venture-capital-based ownership of several large dental chains is dictating treatment and it's mostly based on profitability.

What are your concerns for the graduating dentist?

Pecina: I don't feel like the opportunities that exist will help them attain their goals, both professionally and monetarily. Except for about 10 percent, every graduating class lacks confidence. We are graduating dentists and then expect them to learn patient care and how to run a business "on the job." They're simply not tough enough, so they are looking to gain

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experience. When you add to that their huge debt, they need a job. This plays right into the hands of the venture-capital-backed dental chains.

Looking ahead, what would you like to see dentistry do in terms of the way it operates as a profession in the next five to 10 years?

Pecina: Let's take a stand for what is right, and get this great profession back to what it used to be. We need to recognize who the underserved really are. It's not those on Medicaid; our government provides for them. It's what I call the "forgotten 50 percent": the hard working, employed people of this country who do not have dental insurance. They are living from paycheck to paycheck, work hard, but do not have a surplus of cash or type A credit to allow them to get the care they need. As dentists, how do we meet their needs?

What is your favorite procedure or part of dentistry?

Pecina: I absolutely love doing immediate dentures along with the accompanying oral surgery. There is nothing more satisfying than getting people healthy and improving their appearance and self-esteem. It truly is the real ultimate in cosmetic dentistry.

Pecina on Products



"I have a team of staff who are always reading on new product results. We will get samples and try them out and evaluate them to see how they fit into our practice. If they give a better result than what we are currently using and it makes sense for us to switch, we will."

Describe your most successful or rewarding experience in your professional life.

Pecina: During the summer of 2008 we had a lot of empty rooms. I decided to offer free dental care, including cleanings, X-rays, fillings, endo, crowns and third molar surgery, to everyone up to age 16. They did not even have to be a patient of record. We did this for three months and donated \$250,000 in care. We saw many single moms, whose kids would have never had dental care otherwise. It was very rewarding. I am very proud to be involved in health care and especially in dentistry. My career has exceeded all my expectations.

What can we expect from Afdent in the future?

Pecina: We are currently working on our true franchise model, which will promote individual private practice ownership. I'd also like to be the voice of all the dentists out there who are frustrated and want to see real change. They deserve to get the most out of their life's work and commitment. To that end, like our franchising model, I will be creating something truly unique for like-minded dentists to participate in, that drives real results. As far as my existing practice, we are currently building a separate 5,000 square foot denture, implant and oral surgery center next door, which will add 11 additional patient care rooms.

What do you like to do when you are not working?

Pecina: I really like to restore antique and classic boats. Rehabbing old buildings and bringing them back to a useful purpose is a passion of mine as well. ■

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