

WHEN YOU NEED MORE THAN A DENTIST

With his pioneering and fast-growing practice, Dr. Bobby Birdi brought specialties in periodontics and prosthodontics under one roof

It's not an exaggeration to say that the revolutionary dentistry business model governing the BC Perio Dental Health and Implant Centre, which so many British Columbians rely on for their dental needs, was created thanks to the powerful vision and considerable tenacity of Dr. Bobby Birdi.

The Edmonton-born Birdi is one of North America's very few Certified Dual Specialists in periodontics and prosthodontics, and he's the only specialist in the world to attain Canadian and American board certifications in both specialties. "Throughout my schooling and during six years of two residencies in the U.S., I became very interested not only with the practice of dentistry, which is my abiding passion, but also how it is delivered to the public."

Prior to forming BC Perio, Birdi noted that if clients had multiple needs that required different skill sets, they would be referred to specialists. "That was fairly common, and it struck me that this was inefficient both for the client as well as the dentist," he recalls.

Birdi moved to Vancouver in 2012 with the aim of providing an all-in-one, world-class dental service to customers. "It's something I'd been dreaming of for years, and I thought it was feasible because consolidation was happening in the medical field with great success. Combining different services and skill sets hadn't yet reached the dentistry profession, and my idea was that if I could acquire several practices and combine them in a new facility, it would provide the public with a team of professionals instead of just one, a variety of services, and improved efficiencies overall."

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALAN CHAN



Fortunately, Birdi had arrived in Vancouver at an opportune time. His strategy for consolidation was to acquire the assets of older practices, and before long his search yielded three such practices on Broadway whose owners bought into the vision of providing a one-stop shop to the public.

BC Perio was born, but as far as Birdi was concerned this was only the foundation of his new company. In short order, he also developed an in-house digital lab (for three-dimensional modeling), a testing and research centre, and many other components that would allow he and his colleagues to provide everything from surgical and periodontal procedures (including surgical laser techniques) to dental implants and cosmetic dentistry.

More acquisitions of dental practices followed. "This allowed me to open a satellite in Coquitlam, and the public responded strongly to being able to drive to a single location, see different specialists, and get a variety of opinions," says Birdi, adding that other components of his business model—such as charging clients a single, flat fee when they visit BC Perio—helped its popularity.

Birdi also strengthened the BC Perio brand by becoming a media celebrity of sorts, appearing on local television and social media channels to explain practices ranging from how 3D image scanning improves surgical outcomes to whether dental implants are superior to dentures (Birdi favors the former because, among other things, implants stimulate bone matter). "I love explaining dentistry to a wide audience because it does away with fears and incorrect assumptions about what we do," he says.

The seemingly tireless Birdi and his colleagues also helped create the Digital Dentistry Institute, which is dedicated to training and guiding members of the dental profession in order to provide the highest possible quality of care in the field of advanced comprehensive dentistry and related fields (the institute is now a mainstay in nine countries globally).

But even though the business model developed by Birdi, now 40, has been mimicked in parts of Eastern Canada and the U.S., it's only been to a limited degree. "In retrospect it was a

daunting task to take on, and it requires enormous time and energy to stay on top of—which I fully intend to continue to do," he says.

So how does Birdi sustain the stamina required to keep his company on the cutting edge of dental care? "Sometimes I wonder," he laughs, and then he pauses to consider the element that motivates him the most. "Maybe it's a cliché to say that it's inspiring to watch people visit us with serious dental issues and leave a short time later being able to smile, chew and speak comfortably, but that's exactly what it does—inspires me to do more and do better.

"Technology is really taking dentistry to the next level, and it's enormously fulfilling to work with colleagues who can pass along its amazing benefits to clients."

As for the future of BC Perio, Birdi is already preparing to expand into other parts of Metro Vancouver. "We'll acquire more practices," he says. "These are exciting times for my colleagues and me, and we look forward to providing even more services throughout the Lower Mainland." ■

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