

DOCTOR *of* DENTISTRY

Special Feature



Dr. Tony Daher
Prosthodontist as 'Quarterback'
and 'Smile Architect'

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By Debbie Sklar

For prosthodontist Tony Daher, D.D.S., M.S.Ed., FACP, his passion has always been to work on complex cases referred by medical and dental professionals.

A graduate of the University of California at Los Angeles from the Graduate Prosthodontic Program and from University of Southern California with a master's degree, Dr. Daher, 53, a Diplomate of the American Board of Prosthodontics, has since the mid-80s built a solid prosthodontic practice based in La Verne, CA, where he continues to treat patients of all ages.

"I have always enjoyed working with my hands and for me to create a smile that pleases someone is the ultimate," he says. "I call myself a dental specialist and my passion is giving people beautiful smiles and improving their lives. I am a smile specialist."

Years ago, when he was first starting out, Dr. Daher says that he had set his sights on engineering, but he became much more interested in dentistry thanks to an uncle who was a medical doctor.

"I wanted to use my hands and I knew that dentistry would be a fine profession where I could help people, be creative and work for

myself," he recalls. "I can't imagine myself doing anything but what I am doing; this profession has been very good to me."

AN INTENSIVE EDUCATION

Dr. Daher is the eldest of four children born to an electrician and a homemaker. He graduated from high school in Beirut, Lebanon, and later, in 1977, he received his Diploma of Doctor of Dental Surgery from Beirut's St. Joseph University, a French-affiliated Jesuit college.

"I was the first in my class to be awarded a French graduate scholarship to study prosthodontics, which took me to Paris," he recalls. "I was there for three years and I studied prosthodontics to further my specialty."

While studying in Paris, Dr. Daher says students were required to read American dental literature to learn about the latest technologies and research abroad.

"I became intrigued by America and I had family in California, so I decided to visit Los Angeles in 1979," he says. "When I came, I loved what I saw, and I decided that I would like to practice in Southern California."

Left to right, standing: Janet, Back Office Assistant; Sherri, Back Office Assistant; George, Lab Technician; Angela, RDH; Diana, RDH. Left to right, seated: Brandi, Clinic Administrator; Dr. Daher; and Rebecca, Receptionist.





Dr. Daher and George discuss a case in their lab.

Dr. Daher did just that by setting down roots in the Golden State in 1980, and then enrolled in a special refresher course at UCLA, which would help him to prepare for his California Dental Licensure Examination. He later passed the intense examination with flying colors the first time around.

With his license in hand, Dr. Daher joined a large general dentistry practice from 1982 through 1984.

“While I was practicing, I earned my Master’s of Science degree in Medical Education from USC in 1984, which took me two years to complete,” he says. “I always liked teaching because it gave me a chance to give back to the dental community and it keeps you thinking.”

Then in 1984, Dr. Daher decided to leave the general practice and return to school to earn his specialty training in prosthodontics from a California-accredited school. In 1988, Dr. Daher received his postgraduate certificate in prosthodontics from UCLA.

He went on to serve as the clinic director for the International Student Program at USC in 1991 and as the director of the Advanced Prosthodontic Program at Loma Linda University (LLU). Currently, he is an associate professor of prosthodontics in the Center for Prosthodontics and Implant Dentistry at LLU.

Dr. Daher possesses an intensive education training program, which was completed in Paris and then “reprogrammed” at UCLA to meet the American accreditation recommendations. This background can account to why he is the most renowned educator and clinician.

All of his studying and training paid off, and Dr. Daher was awarded with a teaching award from USC for his fine work.

By 1992, Dr. Daher got married and he was looking to start his own private practice. He came across a general dentist who was retiring and who had decided that he wanted to sell his practice, which was based in Pomona, CA.

“It was perfect timing, as I was looking to start my own prosthodontic practice and I decided that this was a great area,” he says. “My wife

was from La Verne, so it was close and there were no other prosthodontists in the area at the time. I was the first board-certified prosthodontist here.”

Dr. Daher bought the general practice shortly thereafter, and a few years later, he transitioned it into what it is today, a practice limited to prosthodontics, esthetics and implant dentistry.

“My practice consists of almost all patient-to-patient referrals or straight referrals from dentists or medical doctors,” he says.

THE ROLE OF THE PROSTHODONTIST

These days, Dr. Daher spends the majority of his time utilizing state-of-the-art techniques and procedures required for patients who need complex treatments to restore optimum oral function and esthetics. These complex services include cosmetic dentistry,

dental implants and complex implant supported restorations, challenging complete and partial removable or fixed dentures, complex care management involving multiple specialists, specialized care for geriatric patients, complex restorations for children born with cleft palate or missing teeth, treatment of jaw joint problems, traumatic injuries, snoring and sleep disorders, and oral cancer reconstruction.

“A prosthodontist is like the quarterback of the dental team that consists of a general dentist and often more than one specialist, medical or dental, for complete care,” he says. By the time a patient comes to me, their dental health requires specialty care that a general dentist can’t do. General dentists usually don’t like to treat patients that I see because they are very time consuming. Sometimes, it can take up to a few years to restore the overall smile to a healthy condition: a successful extreme makeover situation.”

How does he accomplish this?

By either placing crowns, bridges, partials, dentures or even implants, a dental substitute for a natural tooth that is usually comprised of titanium and then well-integrated into the bone.

“There is a variety of dental implants, but we use ‘root forms,’” he explains. “In the old days, we would place an implant and then find ourselves waiting three months for it to integrate. Not until then would we start building a crown or bridge over it. Today, the advancements in implant technology afford us to place an implant right after extracting a tooth or to put a crown right over an implant — also known as an ‘immediate replacement’ — right away, practically.”

In other words, thanks to the growth in technology, the quality of today’s implants and techniques are much better than they were even a few years ago.

“We do a lot of the work in our own laboratory on site,” Dr. Daher says. “Since 1992, I have always felt that I had to have my own lab. When you perform prosthodontics without consulting directly with the lab, you may not get quality and predictable results. And in some

cases, I have to sit down with my dental technician to get it right. You know that all patients are not alike and their dental conditions require unique approach and result. In other words, each patient has different demands and different expectations and this is what makes dentistry challenging and not boring.”

However, in his own in-house laboratory, Dr. Daher fabricates the artificial teeth, as well as uses CAD-CAM technology to generate special abutments for implants.

But, if he has a need for additional work, Dr. Daher says he has no problem utilizing outside laboratories when there is a need for special lab services.

“The advantage of sending work out to a specialty lab is so that we can get better quality and precision for some dental procedures that are hard to do in-house,” he says.

AN OFFICE FIT FOR ROYALTY

Of course, making sure that his patients walk away with beautiful smiles is only part of his job. Dr. Daher also enjoys providing his clientele with a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere when they visit his office.

And in order to accommodate them, he has created a soothing environment with beautiful, Louis XIV-style furnishings in the waiting room, a crystal chandelier, lovely framed art work and classical music playing, as well as state-of-the art dental equipment and a warm and caring staff consisting of two receptionists, two dental assistants and two dental hygienists. He is also hoping to add another board-certified prosthodontist associate to his dedicated staff during the coming year.

“I believe we have succeeded because we can surely take care of our patients with unsurpassed expertise and quality,” he says.

When he isn’t immersed in helping his clients capture that perfect Hollywood smile, Dr. Daher continues to teach, as well as take

continuing education courses himself. He is presently an associate professor at LLU two days per month, as well as serving as the co-director of an implant study club, a year-long project.

“I love to teach and I like to give back to the profession,” he says. “Prosthodontics has changed so much since when I first began; today there is high-tech digital equipment, such as computers, cameras and X-rays, which we use daily and we are learning new techniques all of the time. I always tell my colleagues that it is important to stay on top of what the leading edge of the dental profession is presently doing.”

Dr. Daher is also a staff member at Pomona Valley Hospital, where he is often asked to assist in the oral restoration of cancer patients by the hospital’s oncology center. “This is very rewarding to me to see these patients get transformed from a depressive stage to a normal socially active stage,” he states.

“This is very satisfying for me,” he says. “After the radiation and the surgery, I sometimes have to do extensive restoration on patient mouths.”

In terms of his other community involvements, Dr. Daher belongs to the local Rotary Club, local Red Cross, his church and he is a Reserve Specialist, as well as someone who donates to the Los Angeles Police Department.

Dr. Daher’s professional affiliations include the International College of Prosthodontists and the American Academy of Osseointegration. He is a fellow in the American College of Prosthodontists and an active member in the Academy of Fixed Prosthodontics, the Tri-County Dental Association, the California Dental Association and the American Dental Association.

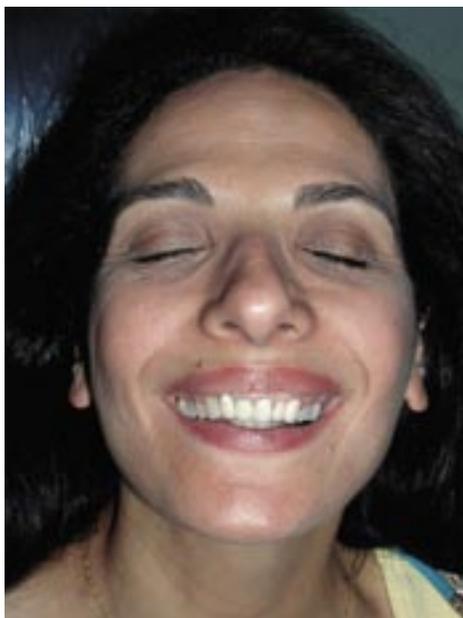
He has written many scientific and clinical articles, and he has lectured nationally and internationally on the subject of prosthodontics (he is co-author of a chapter about implant overdentures, in *The Implant Dentistry* DVD published by LLU).

Away from the office, Dr. Daher enjoys spending time with his wife, Dunia, and their son, Henry, 3 years old. The family, residents of La Verne and likes to travel abroad when they can.

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Before



After



PHOTOS BY DR. TONY DAHER

A successful extreme makeover situation, which took three years to finish, under the care of Dr. Tony Daher, the prosthodontist and smile architect; Dr. Samir Batniji, Endodontist; Dr. Armen Mardirossian, Periodontist; Dr. David Tabata, Orthodontist.