

Dr. François Proulx – Going through a residency program

Dr. O'Keefe: I'm speaking with Dr. François Proulx who has just finished a residency program and he's going to tell us about the experience. First, François, just give us a little background about your professional career to date and where you hope to go in the immediate future.

Dr. Proulx: Well, first of all, good morning Dr. O'Keefe. I'm very grateful to be on the phone actually with you today. Presently right now my situation, I just finished a residency program at the Jewish General Hospital in Montreal. Right now, I will start my career, my first job as a general dentist in Hawkesbury, Ontario, on the 12th of August. Like I said, I'll be working in a French community for three days every week and I will also study full-time for an exam to go study in oral and maxillofacial surgery in the United States. I'm from a little French community in Ontario, northern part of Ontario.

Dr. Proulx: I've been studying for nine years in Ottawa and Montreal. I graduated in 2018 from the University of Montreal dentistry program and I also joined the residency program on the same year for one year of a general practice residency program at the hospital, Hôpital juif.

Dr. O'Keefe: And what attracted you to do the residency program at the Jewish?

Dr. Proulx: Well, there's a lot of, there's a lot of things that I can say about that and most of all it's because it was a 50/50 French and anglophone hospital. So, by that, by doing that, I was very interested in going in an English more community [inaudible]. And when I decided to apply, I went to see the program, I went to see the director. I had spoken with a lot of friends that did the program and they all told me that it was an amazing program, probably one of the best in northern America. I didn't believe it at first but when I decided to go see by myself, I realize how well-structured the program was.

Dr. Proulx: And it was so well structured that everybody wanted to go there. And I'm talking about the three faculties in the Quebec province. And there's also students from Ottawa, Canada, that wants to come and also from the States. And this is unbelievable. That was one reason. The other reason was to, like everybody else, to improve and open up my mind and my thinking and my horizon about dentistry. Because when we graduate, we only see the surface of it. But when we do a residency and a good residency, we have so much experience and at the end of the year you can definitely know what you're loving and what you don't.

Dr. O'Keefe: And what does a typical day of work in a residency program look like?

Dr. Proulx: So, when I started at the residency, I knew that the residency was well-structured. So, I'll explain to you a little bit of why. There's a lot of specialists that come to observe us, but they don't only observe us, they help us, and they give us lectures every day. Like the Monday are more concentrated on oral surgery. The Tuesday it's more prostho and general dentistry. Wednesday, it's more prostho also, and perio. Thursday is endo and perio, and Friday is prostho. So, you had a lot of everything and because we are in a well-rounded and very concentrated residency, they allowed us to do big case. And by that we did also on-call. So, we exchange the on-call schedule in between the six residents.

Dr. Proulx: Jewish General Hospital is not a primary trauma centre. And this is very important to me because in Montreal we have the Montreal General which has the oral surgery program. In the Jewish General Hospital, we don't have the oral surgery program. By that mean when we have a trauma and when we're called by the emerge doctor to come, we have to act as the oral surgery student. So I admitted a lot of patients as an oral surgery resident. We admitted a lot of patients to the OR. I've been involved in a lot of fracture cases. Two times we saved the lives of two patients with [inaudible] angina. This is where I wanted and I decided to concentrate my future on being an oral surgeon because I realized that those responsibilities, I want them to be mine. I want to be the one who will make a real primary difference in the life of patients. And this is like, this touched me a lot. Like, it's not about money, it's not about anything. It's just being there beside the patient and giving him the best care that he needs.

Dr. O'Keefe: Again, maybe you've already said it but, you know, if I was to ask you what did you like best about being in the residency?

Dr. O'Keefe: When you finish dental school, you're only looking at one tooth at a time, because you only know the surface. At the end of the residency you look at the big picture and this is what I liked the most. The treatment planning, this is, I think it's the most difficult part of dentistry and this is where I learned the most. I did a lot of implant cases, dentures on implants. But before going for implants, you need to treat all the rest. You need to teach your patients. You need to repair, like, everything. And after, you do the esthetic and you do the functional treatment. And this is where, this is what I learned the most and the best of the Jewish.

Speaker 1: And I think the experiment that I got is so much worthwhile. Like, at first, we were seeing four patients every day and by the month of August last year we were seeing between seven and 14 patients every day. And another thing that I didn't say is we were six residents and every emergency we had to put some space in our schedule to see them. So we had our private patients from outpatient and we had to deal with the emergency and the inpatient. So, we had a lot of chemotherapy patients, we had a lot of pre-surgery patients, like cardiovascular patients, patients with leukemia, patient with a lot of big

diagnosis and we had to treat them before their other treatment. And that's where I think you learn the most. You learn in difficult challenging, complex situation, I had a lot of those. This is what I learned, and I loved the most.

Dr. O'Keefe: François, to round this up, give me some advice for a young colleague who's thinking about following your footpath.

Dr. Proulx: When I was in third year of my dentistry program, remember in Montreal it's five year, and in third year we have to think about the future. We had to say, okay, do I want to do a residency, or do I want to go immediately in private practice. And I had spoken with a lot with the teachers at the UdeM and they all told me that I needed to do a residency program. Not because I want to be a specialist or anything, just because to be a better dentist. And at that time, I realized that I needed to put the work and by saying that you need to go see the program. They need to see you. They need to see actually what you [inaudible]. Like, are you just a normal student that wants to go in or you want to be the one that they want to give an interview?

Dr. Proulx: So, you need to be authentic. You need to, as a student you need to go and talk to the program, the director of the programs. You need to send some letters. You need to talk with the teachers. You also need, you don't need to be implicated in everything. You don't need to do a lot of research. You just need to talk with the people that are involved around the residency program. They need to know you. And after that, if you're yourself and you actually give your best of what you do in dentistry, in a good way, if you're... Let's say in pre-clinic you go in the lab and you do something, do it as is like the last thing you're going to do in your life. They will always remember you. And when you will ask them to write you a letter of reference after, they will know how good you were in pre-clinic and it continues in fourth and fifth year, when you are in clinic.

Dr. Proulx: Don't be the one that will [inaudible] too much with the teacher. Like just do what you have to do, but at the same time be very respectful and do the best that you can, and I think it will give you the best chances to get in a residency program. You need to be, like if I place you on the line with a hundred people, I want you to be the one who will stand out of this group. And this is what they want, because there are only six spots at the Jewish.

Dr. O'Keefe: Or any program. Like I know there's only six, eight, four. It's like it's very small community and we want, they want the best. They want you.

Dr. O'Keefe: Thank you very much for your solid advice. I know it will be appreciated by our young colleagues.

Dr. Proulx: Thank you very much, Dr. O'Keefe. It's my pleasure.