

Dr. Chad Avery – His Experience Owning a Practice in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia

- Dr. O'Keefe: Today I'm speaking with Dr. Chad Avery and he's a general practitioner in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia and he owns his own practice. And Chad, I'd love to as a warmup to our conversation, just get a little bit of the highlights of your professional career to date.
- Dr. Avery: Hello John, thank you. Basically, I took a little bit of a different path than what I would perceive most students taking in recent years. I graduated from Dalhousie in the spring of 2012 and immediately after I purchased a practice in a large group in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia. There are six dentists practicing there and that has provided me excellent opportunities for mentorship while still being able to own my own practice and be my own boss.
- Dr. O'Keefe: Now, did you have opportunities to go associate first? What attracted you to jump right in? Because as you say, not many will have that opportunity, but what attracted you to jump right into practice ownership?
- Dr. Avery: In that regard, in this particular practice, associateship wasn't really an option for me. The fellow that I was able to buy my practice from was looking to move towards retirement somewhat quickly. So I was able to step in on day one as my own boss and that was kind of the appealing part for me was the ability to choose my own hours and the style of practice that I wanted to work and be able to control my treatment planning and case selection and that sort of thing. And that was quite appealing for me.
- Dr. O'Keefe: And how did you know that you'd get on with the other five people? Did you have any, did you go through some sort of a period of getting to know you?
- Dr. Avery: Well, fortunately for me, one of my uncles is actually a partner at the practice, so I knew him quite well as well as a couple of the other partners there I had been in touch with and, you know, developed a somewhat personal relationship with a few of them prior to moving to Yarmouth. A couple of them I didn't know well but we are fortunate that everything's worked out nicely and we all are just fine. I think that's a real important point though, that going into practice ownership or any sort of arrangement when you're working with somebody else, it's important that you're a match and that you know the person well enough that you're quite certain that you're gonna get along.
- Dr. O'Keefe: Were you able to get an opportunity during your dental student days to go and shadow during vacations or spend time in the office? Because I guess you had a good idea that you were gonna head to this practice once you graduated.

- Dr. Avery: Yeah, I was figuring that out over the last, you know, year and a half to two years maybe of dental school and I did spend a little bit of time in the practice just to kind of get a feel for how things ran around there and how everybody got along. You know, it's a little bit of a drive away from where I was in school, so I wasn't able to spend maybe as much time as I probably should have. But it worked out fine in the end.
- Dr. O'Keefe: Now, as a practice owner, you're a multitasker, you've got lots of different roles. What's a typical day for Chad Avery in your practice?
- Dr. Avery: Well, I keep quite busy at work. On a typical day I'll have three chairs running at any given time. And, you know, my practice is primarily focused on restorative dentistry as well as providing good periodontal management to our patients. So, you know, depending on the day and what kind of cases I'm doing that day usually one chair is devoted to what I would consider to be dental work and the other two are being run by hygienists and we, you know, move a lot of patients through there and I'm hoping most of the time. I will kind of cater different days to different case selection. And if I'm doing bigger cases sometimes, I'll have a little bit less going on in hygiene rooms to give me the time to devote the attention that some of those cases deserve. So, we just kind of work around what comes our way.
- Dr. O'Keefe: Fair enough. And how do you get time to do the practice management? And do the six of you sit down on a regular basis to decide policies? How does that work?
- Dr. Avery: Well, in our situation we're very fortunate that we're able to employ a practice manager within our office. And that was a really appealing part of this practice for me. I don't consider myself to be strong in business and I think that my time is best spent doing dental work and devoting somebody else's time to managing that sort of stuff. We do, you know, somewhat regularly have meetings between our partners to discuss different directions of the practice and different things that are going on. But the day to day stuff is mostly run by our business manager. And it's great to have somebody like that that you can trust him to make those decisions on your behalf and get that sort of work done so you can focus on what you've trained to do.
- Dr. O'Keefe: So today, what do you like best about being a practice owner?
- Dr. Avery: I think the number one thing for me would be what I would refer to as professional autonomy. Maybe the ability to do your own treatment planning, to have your own case selection, to choose the equipment that you're going to use, the supplies that you're going to use and what works best in your hands. And you know I think that, you know, being able to make those decisions

without any sort of external influence allows you to provide the best possible care for your patients.

Dr. O'Keefe: Now, knowing that not everybody's going to have the opportunity to jump straight into practice ownership from dental school have you got some bits of advice for senior dental students or early career people who are thinking of buying a practice, you know, seeking out, purchasing, buying and owning a practice?

Dr. Avery: Yeah, I think a really important playing in that is to consider mentorship opportunities in whatever capacity you're gonna transition from school into work. You know, I've witnessed it with myself and a few other dentists that have worked with us as associates that dental school provides a very good base of knowledge but once you're thrown out into the real world there's a lot of cases that you're going to need some help or some advice with and finding a situation to work in where there's somebody there to help mentor you and whether that be directly in your office or around nearby with different study clubs. What's worked really well for me is being involved with NSDA and getting to know a lot of other dentists with a lot of other experience as well. So, opportunities in organized dentistry for a mentorship as well, so. I think that's important.

Dr. O'Keefe: Right, right. And did you go about picking up the knowledge about practice management or did you say, well, you know, hey, that's not going to be my bag. I'm not going to concentrate on it more than I need to.

Dr. Avery: Personally, I would say I've dabbled in that. But for the most part I leave that to the people who know best.

Dr. O'Keefe: Fair enough. Fair enough. Any final word of advice as we wrap up this conversation?

Dr. Avery: Well, I think just, you know, very important to anybody coming out of school or early on in their career is that if they're looking at buying a practice, just make sure that you do your research and make sure that you know what you're buying. Make sure you know the demographics of the area that it's in and be sure that the style of practice is going to cater to what it is that you're most interested in doing. It's important.

Dr. O'Keefe: So good research, right fit right relationships. Dr Chad Avery, thank you very much for this conversation.

Dr. Avery: Thank you.