



PRACTICE PROFILE

DENTAL PRACTICE

Heather M. Wilmore, DDS, PLLC
Houston, Texas

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OFFICE

Square feet: 3,144
Five Operatories

OPERATORY EQUIPMENT

- A-dec Chairs, Lights, Stools and Units
- A-dec Accessory and Treatment Consoles
- A-dec Preference ICC Sterilization Center
- A-dec W&H Handpieces
- A-dec Assistina
- A-dec Lisa MB17 Sterilizer
- Air Techniques AirStar 30/VacStar 40 Package
- CAESY Patient Education Systems
- Eaglesoft Practice Management Software
- PLANMECA Intra Intraoral X-rays
- PLANMECA Proline XC Digital Pan
- Schick Digital Sensors
- Zoll AED Plus Defibrillator



Becoming the Boss

When Heather Wilmore changed careers from pediatric nursing to dentistry, she discovered her true calling.

At Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, Texas, Heather Wilmore played a vital role in caring for pediatric intensive care patients and their families. But after several years, she realized that she wanted to grow in her career, but didn't want to become a medical doctor. A visit to her dentist for a regular cleaning opened her eyes to what would become her passion – and, ultimately, paved the way for her to care for patients in a deeper, more meaningful way.

A Different Way

On the ninth floor of a professional building in the Galleria area of Houston, Heather Wilmore, DDS, PLLC, has been practicing dentistry for two years. It's not her first profession, but it certainly is her chosen one.

The office exudes a classic Old World, Mediterranean feel, with a soothing water feature and gold, black and bronze coloring throughout. Dr. Wilmore wanted a

welcoming practice environment that allowed her patients to relax. Her husband, Terry, brought her vision to life and created a space that doesn't resemble a typical dentist's office.

With a background in nursing, Dr. Wilmore approaches dentistry a bit differently than her peers. Spending three-and-a-half years as a pediatric nurse in the ICU gave her a tough skin for things beyond her control and yet she maintains a soft touch with her clients. She balances her schedule to optimize one-on-one time with patients and provides her cell phone for emergencies day or night, weekday or weekend.

Skip Fortune, Dr. Wilmore's equipment specialist, says, "She has a very caring personality and she wants to do what's right for the patient. When you look at her office, it's gorgeous and that's Heather. She's just like that, a gorgeous person inside and out."

Personal Growth

While working at Texas Children's, Dr. Wilmore began to crave more growth from her career. She wanted to have a greater impact on the level of patient care, but didn't feel that medical doctor was the right choice for her. The long hours in residency and unpredictable schedule once out were two of the biggest turnoffs. But until she had an epiphany at her dentist's office, she hadn't considered the profession.

"I realized, [my dentist is] a doctor, he's 100-percent involved with his patients, he owns his own practice, has great hours – the kind of hours a woman could have, especially if she wanted to be a mom. That same day I left the dental office and told my mom I wanted to be a dentist," Dr. Wilmore says.

Getting started on the path to becoming a dentist was a challenge, but Dr. Wilmore lucked out. She was accepted at the University of Texas – Houston, the only place she applied because her fiance worked at Texas Children's Hospital (it's where the two met) and she didn't want to uproot him. While taking care of a young boy at the hospital, Dr. Wilmore met a key alumnus of UT – Houston, Dr. Les Fullerton. The boy turned out to be Dr. Fullerton's grandson. With the doctor's encouragement, she trusted her decision to become a dentist even more.

Dr. Wilmore married in the summer of 2003 and then started dental school, which was in some ways even more difficult than her job as a nurse. "It was challenging going back to school, getting back into the groove of taking tests and studying. Dental school was a job, I was studying all the time." >>

"I wanted to practice my philosophy and be different."

– Dr. Heather Wilmore





Getting Started

After graduating from dental school, Dr. Wilmore took an associateship with a local dentist but quickly realized that she wanted something different. After she resigned and began looking for other opportunities, she remembered Monetta Reyes, the Patterson Dental territory representative who worked with her former employer. Dr. Wilmore called Reyes and the two began meeting regularly to discuss Dr. Wilmore's future. Out of their working relationship, a friendship developed.

One evening, at dinner with Dr. Wilmore and her husband, Reyes presented the couple with an idea that the doctor should start her own practice. "I was looking for other associateships, but knew I wouldn't be happy," Dr. Wilmore says. "I wanted to practice my philosophy and be different."

"We had no training in school about how to start your own practice. There was no business management training," Dr. Wilmore says. Because of this, she placed her trust in Reyes to provide her with the resources and guidance to start her own practice. Beginning with the Practice Harmony seminar at Scottsdale Center for Dentistry, Dr. Wilmore "leaned on me and trusted me to guide her," Reyes says. "It was just having a relationship with someone you could trust to help make decisions."

Logistically Speaking

In July 2008, Dr. Wilmore opened her new office – a five-operatory practice just minutes away from her home. "The dentist I've been going to since I was 14 is in a multi-story professional building and that's what I was used to," Dr. Wilmore says. "When it came time to think about my practice space, I automatically knew I wanted a professional building."

The office previously housed another local dentist, so plumbing and wiring were already in place. Equipment Specialist Skip Fortune and the Patterson team enlarged



the waiting area and added a patient restroom to the front of the practice. With guidance from Dr. Wilmore and her husband, the Patterson team transformed a straight hallway leading to the operatories into a gentle curve, which gives the illusion of more space and also adds to the privacy within the practice.

The existing lab, which was quite large at 600 square feet, was cut down in order to reconfigure all the operatories to be the same size and in order to make them more efficient. Two of the operatories are outfitted and a third is being completed this year.

In order to equip her practice, Dr. Wilmore relied on the assistance of Fortune and Reyes. The two invited the doctor and her husband on an A-dec VIP trip to the manufacturer's headquarters in Oregon. There, Dr. Wilmore saw first-hand how the company makes its world-class products and how it guarantees quality through fine craftsmanship. "I wish all of my clients would go through the same process that Dr. Wilmore did," Fortune says of the A-dec trip. "She was educated and therefore more comfortable with the selection process."

Dr. Wilmore chose the A-dec 12 o'clock duo delivery system and 511 dental chair as well as lights, stools and treatment consoles for the operatories. And with both electric and air-driven handpieces connected to her 12 o'clock console, Dr. Wilmore is well equipped to tackle a variety of challenging cases. "The electric handpieces come in handy trying to get off a hard crown or Zirconium," she says.

Fortune spent a lot of time talking with Dr. Wilmore about available technologies and stressed the need to base her decisions on both short- and long-term gains. "I said, if she embraces technology, she'll see a big benefit in that initially she'll be able to do with two or three staff members what others would have to do with four or five," Fortune says.

In order to be on the forefront of dentistry, the doctor selected digital technologies whenever she had a choice between traditional and digital. She launched her new practice with Eaglesoft Practice Management Software. The chartless office initially cost more to set-up, but Dr. Wilmore says already they have saved money by cutting out the need for mailings and postage. Patients receive text messages and/or emails as appointment reminders and all insurance billing is done online.

Patient education is a big component of Dr. Wilmore's practice. For assistance, she and her staff use CAESY Patient Education Systems presentations in the operatories and print or make digital copies of relevant information for patients to take home. "We stress the correlation between oral health and nutrition...and how this affects the rest of your body," she says.

Motivated to Succeed

While it's still early in her career, Dr. Wilmore pushes herself each year to learn a new technology or product that helps her better serve her patients. She is a certified Invisalign provider and currently is introducing Under Armour Performance Mouthwear™ »



to her patients. In the future, she plans to attend a Scottsdale Center for Dentistry 3D Summit to learn more about how CEREC and GALILEOS technologies can help her reach her goal to perform implants.

"I've been doing this almost 20 years," Reyes says, "and I've never seen someone, at such an early age, who is so committed to doing what it takes to do the right thing for the patient."

Fortune says he knows Dr. Wilmore will be successful in her new-found career because "she knows she doesn't have all the answers, but she's not afraid to go ask someone or to search out the answers."

Dr. Wilmore and her husband sacrificed to get where they are today, living with her parents for a year when they opened the practice. She continues to work a second job on the weekends in order to pay off the debt brought on by school and opening the new practice. But she would do it all over again and, in fact, is a vocal advocate for young dentists to start their own practice. She and Reyes have teamed up to present to third- and fourth-year dental students on the subject at her alma mater.

"It's definitely more tough than what I was expecting," Dr. Wilmore says, "but I wouldn't trade it. I love my own practice and being my own boss...I'm building my future and building equity." **PT**



From left to right:
Stephen Brown, Bo Martin, David Langley, Skip Fortune, Monetta Reyes, Dr. Heather Wilmore
and Tim Wagstaff

PATTERSON TEAM

Tim Wagstaff, *Branch Manager*

Monetta Reyes, *Territory Representative*

Skip Fortune, *Equipment Specialist*

Bo Martin, *Service Technician*

Stephen Brown, *Service Technician*

Jessie Sweringen, *Service Technician*

David Langley, *Office Designer*



For more information on
Heather M. Wilmore, DDS, PLLC,
visit www.drwilmore.com