



PRACTICE PROFILE

DENTAL PRACTICE

Vang Dental Clinic
St. Paul, Minnesota

Dr. Kou Vang
Dr. Peter Nguyen

OFFICE

Square feet: 4,000

OPERATORY EQUIPMENT

- A-dec Cascade/Radius 1040 chairs, stools, delivery units
- A-dec cabinetry, treatment consoles, central consoles and cabinet-mount lights
- Schick digital sensors
- Sirona Orthophos XG 5 DS Digital Panoramic X-ray
- Triangle sterilization center
- SciCan Statim 5000 Cassette Autoclave
- RAMVAC Bison 3 Power Unit
- A-dec handpieces
- DentalEZ CA-825D lube-free compressor
- EagleSoft Practice Management Software
- Patterson hardware



A Family of Thousands

Editor's Note: Patterson Today shares stories of dental professionals who bring their practice to the next level through investments in technology, equipment and new or remodeled office space. But have you ever wondered how our featured doctors are faring years down the road? We checked in with Dr. Kou Vang, whose St. Paul, Minn., practice was featured in Fall 2000.

Dr. Kou Vang's practice has changed tenfold over the last several years – from what he affectionately calls “a little grandma and grandpa shop” – to a state-of-the-art dental facility.

Dr. Vang's passion for dentistry and the importance he places on family hasn't changed a bit over the years. His practice, Vang Dental Clinic, is staffed by several family members, including two of his sons, daughter and daughter-in-law. Since Vang Dental Clinic opened in 1998, Dr. Vang has treated nearly 20,000 patients. He says every single one of those patients is now a member of his family. “My practice is successful because I treat people just like my own family,” he said. “We are a family clinic and everyone who comes in becomes our family member, too.”

Dr. Vang is so dedicated to the practice of dentistry that he has never turned a patient away due to inability to pay or lack of an

appointment. Some of his unscheduled patients have to wait nearly two hours to see him, but Dr. Vang tells them that if they wait, he will see them that day. He sometimes stays open as late as 9:00 p.m. treating patients. "I feel that if I don't take care of their problem, I can't go to sleep at night. I'll be thinking about the pain they must be feeling," he said. And Dr. Vang's dedication hasn't gone unnoticed – he received the Minnesota Dental Association's Humanitarian Service Award in April 2008.

From a Dream to a Reality

Vang Dental Clinic is located in St. Paul, Minn., home to the largest urban Hmong population in the world. One of only three Hmong dentists in the area, Dr. Vang's services were in high demand when he opened his doors 10 years ago. Word of mouth spread in the community and his patient load quickly increased.

As his practice grew, Dr. Vang found himself working longer and later to keep pace in the small space. He had already expanded from two operatories to four and he had no room to grow in his current building. When a large building just two blocks from his practice became available in 2006, Dr. Vang knew it would be the perfect location for his new, larger practice. But Dr. Vang's dream went beyond just expanding his practice – he also wanted to create a one-stop medical center for the community, with dental, medical, pharmacy, chiropractic, optometry and other healthcare facilities in one location. The new building provided the perfect location to make that dream a reality.

Dr. Vang consulted with his Patterson Equipment Specialist Joe Norell, whom he's worked with the past 10 years, before purchasing the building. Norell thought the space was perfect for Dr. Vang's next move. "He needed more treatment rooms," said Norell. "He was seriously squeezed."

Construction began on the building infrastructure in the summer of 2007. It was a long process, due to several unexpected surprises in the old building. Patterson was finally able to begin work on the eight-operator, 4,000-square-foot dental practice in January 2008.

Dr. Vang wanted to continue seeing patients during construction, and Norell devised a smart and economical plan to make that possible. Dr. Vang continued to practice in his existing office until four new A-dec chairs were installed in the new practice. He then moved into the new practice over a weekend and started seeing patients there the following Monday, while the cabinetry and chairs from his four existing operatories were moved and installed later that week. This allowed for a seamless move into the new

practice. Vang Dental Clinic was only closed for one day during the three-month construction process for a day of EagleSoft Practice Management training. Dr. Vang credits Patterson for making such a smooth transition possible. "Patterson was incredible from start to finish," said Dr. Vang. "It went really smooth and I had no problems."



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Making the Clinic Less Clinical

Because the Hmong community tends to be skeptical of Western medicine, Dr. Vang wanted his clinic to look less like a clinic and more like a shopping mall. A modern, open floor plan features a 3,000-square-foot central lobby that serves as a waiting area for all of the healthcare facilities and tenants in the building. Each facility has its own private entrance that faces the lobby, putting clinical procedures out of sight, and easing the fears of anxious patients. "I want to bridge the cultural gap by educating, nurturing and comforting my patients in a safe and professional environment," he said.

With the trickle of a water fountain in the background, exquisite marble floors, stone columns bordered by live plants and beautiful sconces hanging from the ceiling, the lobby is anything but clinical. A 50" plasma flat-screen television with rows of chairs provides a comfortable place for patients to relax and socialize with one another while they wait for appointments. "I wanted the office to be warm and welcoming to patients and visitors, so the moment they walk into the clinic they know this is not a threatening place," said Dr. Vang. »



Dr. Vang enlisted Mohagen/Hansen Architectural Group, Patterson Dental and Carlson-LaVine General Contractors to continue the same warm, welcoming feeling of the lobby throughout the design of his dental practice. Gorgeous wood flooring and walls painted in earth tones create a soothing environment. His old and new sage A-dec chairs and coordinating cabinetry blend seamlessly in the new space. Natural light from a

bank of windows spills into the operatories, brightening the entire practice. Privacy screens permit patients to see out the windows, but prevent passers-by from looking in.

Because family is such an important part of his practice, Dr. Vang wanted to provide a space for his team to unwind. Vang Dental Clinic's huge breakroom features a full kitchen and several tables for the staff of 11 to relax and enjoy an occasional meal made by Dr. Vang's wife, Song.

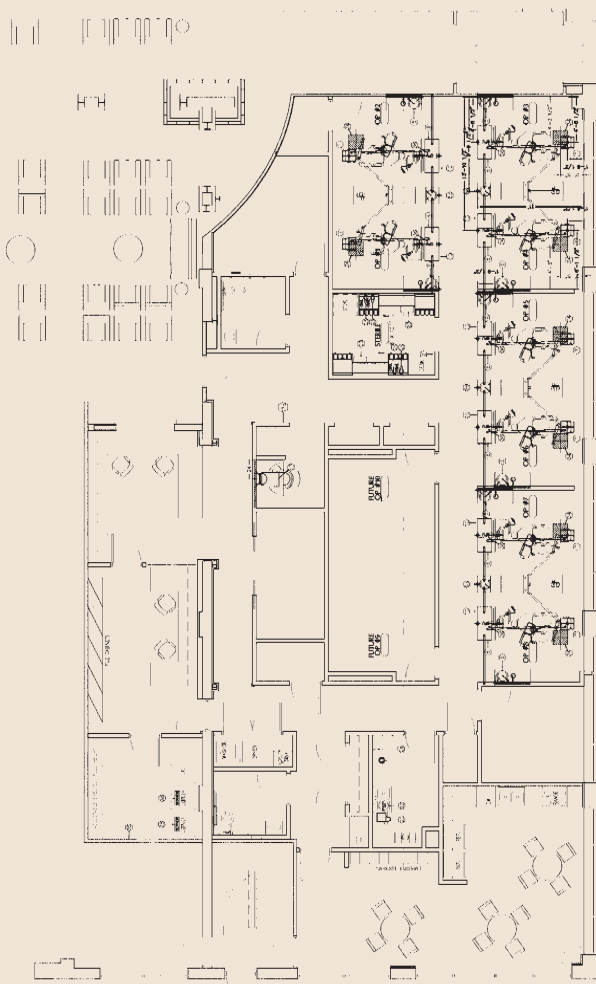
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I wish I knew this stuff a long time ago –
it makes life a little bit easier." – Dr. Kou Vang**

A Renewed Love for Dentistry

In an effort to make procedures easier in his practice – and to allow him to see more patients in less time – Dr. Vang equipped his new practice with an array of leading-edge equipment and technology, including EagleSoft Practice Management Software, Schick digital radiography, a Sirona Orthophos XG 5 DS panoramic X-ray machine and a Triangle eight-foot sterilization center.

Norell played an important role in helping Dr. Vang select his equipment and technology. Dr. Vang was impressed with the time Norell spent discussing the latest options and making sure he felt comfortable with his decisions. "I was very impressed with Joe," Dr. Vang said. "He took the time to answer all of my questions and concerns about the new equipment and technology."

Dr. Vang has seen a huge increase in productivity since integrating his new technology. Radiographs that would have previously taken



PATTERSON TEAM

From left to right:
Joe Norell, John Dreher, Dan Konicek, Dan Klein,
Jon Anderson, Gary Long, Dr. Kou Vang

Dan Konicek, *Branch Manager*

Joe Norell, *Equipment Specialist*

Jon Anderson, *Sales Representative*

Dan Klein, *Service Technician*

John Dreher, *Service Technician*

Gary Long, *Office Design*

five minutes to develop are ready in seconds and available for patients to view on the 22" Samsung LCD screens hanging from the ceilings in each of the operatories. Dr. Vang says all his new technology has renewed his love of dentistry. "I love dentistry, but even more now!" he said. "I wish I knew this stuff a long time ago – it makes life a little bit easier."

Another way that Patterson makes life easier for Dr. Vang is the personal service from his Patterson Sales Representative Jon Anderson. Anderson visits Dr. Vang's office every two weeks to restock his supplies, answer questions and make sure he's satisfied with his products. "Anything I need, any problems that I have, Jon is always there to help me," said Dr. Vang. "Plus, my supplies arrive at my front door in one or two days. And if I don't like the product, I can return it with no questions asked."

Dr. Vang said his experience with his Patterson team has been remarkable. "I truly appreciate their guidance and all the work they have done for me over the last 10 years," he said. "I don't know how I would have done this without them."

A Medical Center for the Community

To help manage his ever-increasing patient load, Dr. Vang hired an associate, Dr. Peter Nguyen, just seven months after opening his new practice. Even with Dr. Nguyen lightening the load, Dr. Vang says he is still overwhelmed with new patients attracted to his state-of-the-art practice. Dr. Vang said he will most likely add another associate in the near future. He also has two unequipped operatories, plus ample space within the building to expand into if the demand is there.

Dr. Vang is currently in the process of acquiring healthcare tenants to make his one-stop medical center a dream come true. His patients are so appreciative of the new practice and clinic he is creating just for them. "The moment patients walk into the building they say, 'Wow, I've never seen a place like this before,'" he said. "And I tell them, 'This is your clinic. Without you, there would be no clinic.'" **PT**