

Breaking down the language barrier

A look at the benefits of a bilingual dental team when establishing a new practice.



With excellent communication at the heart of any great dental experience, dentists Loredana and Mihai Tanasiuc certainly have their finger on the pulse when it comes to caring for their fellow compatriots. Given the sizeable Romanian population in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, the couple have tapped into a vital need.

Their business model at Fitze (pronounced Fee-tse) Clinics, a dental and facial aesthetic practice situated in the Hertfordshire town some 24 miles outside of London, is based on the single premise of empathetic care. Its very existence removes one of the most common barriers faced by those of us who choose to resettle in another country – language.

By eradicating this major hurdle in dental access, they have secured a loyal patient base. Besides principal Loredana and lead dentist Mihai, there are also three associates with special interests in endodontics and periodontics – Oana Anton, Dalma Nagy and Bogdan Bezuhane. Their expertise contributes to the predictability of treatment results.

And whilst the town might be heavily inhabited by Romanian nationals, most of whom have settled status in the UK, Fitze Clinics does not preclude anyone else in the community – the whole team is at least bilingual.

Mihai is fluent in English, Romanian, French, Italian and can understand Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and German. Some dental nurses are fluent in English, Russian and Hungarian. They actively encourage employees to take on foreign language classes.

As well as general dental care, Fitze Clinics offers restorative dentistry and aesthetic treatments – from teeth whitening to dental implants, dermal fillers to anti-wrinkle procedures – to create a gamut of options for those seeking facial enhancement.

Mihai has innovated with his way of delivering dentistry before. 24/7 Dental Clinics is a seven-days-a-week practice that, since 2012, has operated an 8.00am-10.00pm service in Harrow, Middlesex, providing patients with flexible access rarely seen within the profession. What is truly impressive there is that, even to this day, the place does not have a sign up saying ‘dentist’,

which means that the 15,000-plus registered patients learned about its existence mainly via word of mouth.

Fitze Clinics is his latest business venture, which was inevitably about ‘location, location, location’.

Despite being hit hard by the pandemic – having to close its doors almost immediately after opening them – the business managed to survive and is now solid. October 2021 marked its second birthday.

For Mihai and Loredana, the choice of where to open was again based on proximity from home that allows a fast attendance to their patients. Fitze Clinics’ approach places patient needs at the centre of its business model.

Mihai explains, “The purpose of Fitze is to provide Romanian patients with a health care team of their own background who can communicate in their language and better understand their needs. Some 97 per cent of our registered patients are Romanians and we discovered very quickly that one happy patient equals five recommendations.”

But, as with any business or service, five-star reviews are not simply ➔

awarded for delivering on promises. Mihai acknowledges, “A ‘happy patient’ does not just mean a successful crown or RCT. Recommendations appear only if the entire patient journey is excellent.”

And, by adding facial aesthetics to their treatment options, Loredana and Mihai believe this dual approach not only opens up patients to a variety of ‘journeys’, as it were, but can also enhance any dental outcome.

“We have managed to surpass many of our patient’s expectations a number of times, simply by drawing attention to other aesthetic flaws or irregularities that may have evaded their perception. Sometimes, a fuller set of lips or a reduction in the appearance of lines around the mouth turns a ‘good’ dental result into an ‘excellent’ one.”

Mihai continues, “A beautiful setting was not a primary part of our criteria for Fitze Clinics when we started our journey, but it was an important one. Patients who request aesthetic treatments are very often also perceptive about their environment. In dentistry, our business setting becomes their environment for a while, which is why we did not wish to disappoint.”

They sourced their equipment from Henry Schein, whilst everything else was bespoke. Mihai explains, “They were great from start to finish, and I felt reassured that they were a large distributor, who had much experience in practice refurbishment. We designed the layout and executed the project, coordinating various teams of builders and taking six months to complete. Because of the pandemic, we had to purchase extra equipment to minimise the risks of contracting Covid-19, re-routing funds that were meant to go into advertising.”

Comfort is important, both for the clinicians and patients, and central to this is of course the dental chair. Whilst his choice is evidently complementary to the clinic’s décor, the ergonomics are what matter, affecting the comfort of patients as well as the productivity of the team.

Mihai says, “We have two surgeries and both are equipped with the Belmont Cleo2. Besides being much appreciated by patients for how comfortable they are, we value their design that allows easy access for the dental nurse when moving around it.

“It is a discreet approach because the design does not immediately point out their purpose, thereby reducing the patient’s stress level. It is for this reason that Belmont ticks all my boxes.”

But for Loredana and Mihai, it is the team’s excellent communication skills that is the glue that hold together the other pieces to create the best experience possible for their patients. Investment in the latest equipment also helps to deliver optimum care. “This is paramount,” Mihai insists. “I would not be able to call myself a good dentist unless I had the tools that match my skills.”

‘The creation of beauty is art’, the practice website proclaims, and the team at this aesthetic-focused clinic is certainly well-qualified to achieve stunning smiles. But Fitze Clinics is so much more than this, successfully bridging what can be a huge gap for patients seeking care in a country alien to them in both culture and language.