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Kathleen Chan
DDS, MMSc
and Ivy Chen
DDS, MMSc

Orthodontics for Children and Adults

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Andover's Orthodontics for Children and Adults

The Practice of Kathleen Chan, D.D.S., M.M.Sc.,
and Ivy Chen, D.D.S., M.M.Sc.

By Margo Steiner

If there is such a thing as dental karma, orthodontists Kathleen Chan, D.D.S., M.M.Sc., and Ivy Chen, D.D.S., M.M.Sc., have it. It's a practice rooted in the perfect confluence of a shared philosophy, identical goals and a common history. The result is an orthodontic practice that comes close to achieving the ideal partnership.

The doctors' similarities are striking. Aside from their names and physical appearance, both are graduates of the Harvard School of Dental Medicine and are Diplomates of the American Board of Orthodontics, their husbands went to MIT and their children are essentially the same ages.

Colleagues, Friends, Partners: Orthodontists Ivy Chen and Kathleen Chan



PHOTO BY DANIELLE DELUCIA

"We think so much alike," laughs Dr. Chen, "that we can complete each other's sentences." The two, in fact, are also so closely attuned that they've been able to coordinate their family lives with their professional lives. "Our youngest children," says Dr. Chan, "were born six weeks apart this winter. We were so fortunate to have each other to cover the practice after their births. After Elyse's birth in December, Ivy covered for me, then I jumped right back in after she had Sebastian." In many ways, the two liken their practice to another child they're nurturing.

The biggest beneficiaries of this extraordinary partnership, aside from the doctors themselves, are the patients in their care.

"We essentially share the same philosophies and ideas," says Dr. Chen. Both are driven by perfection, and plan and work very hard to achieve the best outcome in any situation, be it a patient's treatment, communicating with patients' families and their general dentists, or simply providing a comfortable environment in the office. "Maybe our personalities led us to choose this career," Dr. Chen says with a smile. "We just innately like to put things in perfect order."

The two met at Harvard School of Dental Medicine's orthodontic residency program, where Dr. Chan was Dr. Chen's senior by two years. Following graduation, Dr. Chan remained in Boston, as did Dr. Chen upon completing her residency two years later. The friendship they developed during their residency program endured, although both by then were working as associates in different practices.

"We hung out socially with our husbands — both of whom had the MIT connection — and eventually came

to the conclusion that we might make good partners,” says Dr. Chan. “We’re similar in personality, in our interests, in work habits and especially in our goals.” Both wanted to remain in the area and build something that could grow with them. They also wanted to create a practice that reflected their professional philosophy and personal style.

In 2007, after a year spent looking for the perfect location, they opened their office in the Butler Bank building in Andover, and have never looked back. Situated in the heart of downtown, it has everything the doctors were looking for: a convenient location, parking and enough space to grow. Because the location they chose was in a new building under construction, the two were able to design a space that reflects their unique style and personalities. The end result is an open, warm and inviting environment.

Into that environment, Dr. Chan and Dr. Chen have incorporated a highly advanced level of technology to ensure that their patients receive the most comprehensive and up-to-date care. In addition to digital X-rays, digital study models and an electronic record keeping system that helps them streamline data management, they regularly look for new ways to optimize patient outcomes. “We’re constantly upgrading our systems,” Dr. Chen says. “As we add to our repertoire, we’ll continue to evaluate the evidence and success of new technologies.” Those that work, they incorporate into their practice.

It’s this state-of-the-art technology and the digital imaging that allow the pair to diagnose and treat patients both effectively and efficiently. “Our primary goal,” Dr. Chan says, “is to achieve the best results possible and to keep the treatment time as short as reasonable for our patients.” The practice makes numerous options available, from conventional metal braces to ceramic braces and various retention appliances. “One of the notable options we offer,” Dr. Chan says, “are customized lingual braces, called iBraces. Harvard is one of the few orthodontic programs that teaches lingual orthodontics, and we’ve been practicing this technique since our residencies there.”

For the two specialists, it’s all about the patients. “We make it a priority to spend a lot of time personally getting to know our patients and understanding their needs,” Dr. Chen says. Each possesses tremendous empathy and compassion for their adolescent patients and their parents. That same understanding extends to the adult patients who represent a significant portion of their practice. Both doctors wore braces as adults, so they relate easily to older patients going through the process long past childhood.

I asked Dr. Chan if she and her partner bring something different to the profession as females and mothers. While quick to point out that expertise and skill have nothing to do with gender, she does feel that “after we became mothers, we understood firsthand how emotional the parent-child relationship is, and we could truly empathize with our patients’ parents.” Because the two have young children whose favorite word is sometimes an adamant “no,” and who sometimes need to flex their independence by being contrary, the doctors are accustomed to collaborating with their adolescent patients as a team to reach a common goal.

Patient care is very much a tandem affair in their office. “For every patient that enters our practice,” Dr. Chen says, “Kathleen and I develop the treatment plan together and monitor the patient’s progress together. This makes us basically

Dr Ivy Chen works with a patient



PHOTO BY DANYELLE DELUCIA



Dr. Kathleen Chan at work in the beautifully designed orthodontic work station area.

interchangeable. Our patients appreciate the benefit of having both of our skills and experience.”

It’s like having “a built-in second opinion,” adds Dr. Chan.

Adult patient Donna C. finds that especially valuable. She’d had braces in junior high school, but found her teeth slipping out of alignment as she grew into adulthood. Thinking a retainer might be helpful, she made the rounds of orthodontists without success. Several advised her against pursuing it, while her children’s orthodontist suggested full metal braces, something she was not willing to pursue at her age.

“It was a great experience, however, once I found Drs. Chan and Chen,” she says. “They designed my treatment together, suggested a combination of Invisalign and ceramic braces and were so accommodating. I really couldn’t have asked for more and I smile all the time now.”

What Donna especially likes about this practice is its flexibility — including Saturday appointments — and its ability to maintain appointments with little to no waiting. “Even though they were pregnant essentially at the same time, I never had an appointment cancelled,” she says.

Outside the practice, the two have equally busy lives. Dr. Chen teaches orthodontics at Harvard’s dental school, is actively involved in the American Association of Orthodontists and is Chairperson-Elect of the Merrimack Valley District Dental Society. What she enjoys most about teaching is “not only giving back to the profession the precious gifts of education that we received from our instructors and colleagues, but also being a role model and

providing an example.” Similarly, as a member of the dental profession, she is cognizant of the vital responsibility she has to contribute to her local dental community.

Dr. Chan is actively involved in Great Women to Know, an organization of professional women who mentor and support middle school students from Lawrence’s Esperanza Academy, and is a “buddy” to an eighth grade student she’ll mentor through high school. Dr. Chan explains that they both take very seriously their responsibility to serve as role models for young people.

As for their own work, the two professional women continue to take the practice of orthodontics to the next level. “Our dental philosophy is centered on improvement,” Dr. Chen says. “We love our careers so much because we can make such a positive change in a person’s esthetics, oral function and self-perception. We are always striving to improve ourselves. It is a fundamental part of orthodontic treatment, and we extend this to everything we do in our practice.” That’s how Drs. Chan and Chen endeavor to make their patients’ experiences in their practice not just good, but better than excellent.

Dr. Kathleen Chan and Dr. Ivy Chen’s practice is located at 16 North Main St. #200, Andover, MA 01810. Office hours are Monday through Saturday by appointment. For further information, visit www.corthodontics.com, call (978) 475-2222 or e-mail info@corthodontics.com. ■

