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**Priti Naik,
D.D.S.**
A Modern Practice With
Old-Fashioned Values

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Priti Naik, D.D.S.

A Modern Practice With Old-Fashioned Values

By Elizabeth Gotzy

Just last year, Priti Naik, D.D.S., saw her dream of starting her own community-based, family-centered dental practice come to fruition.

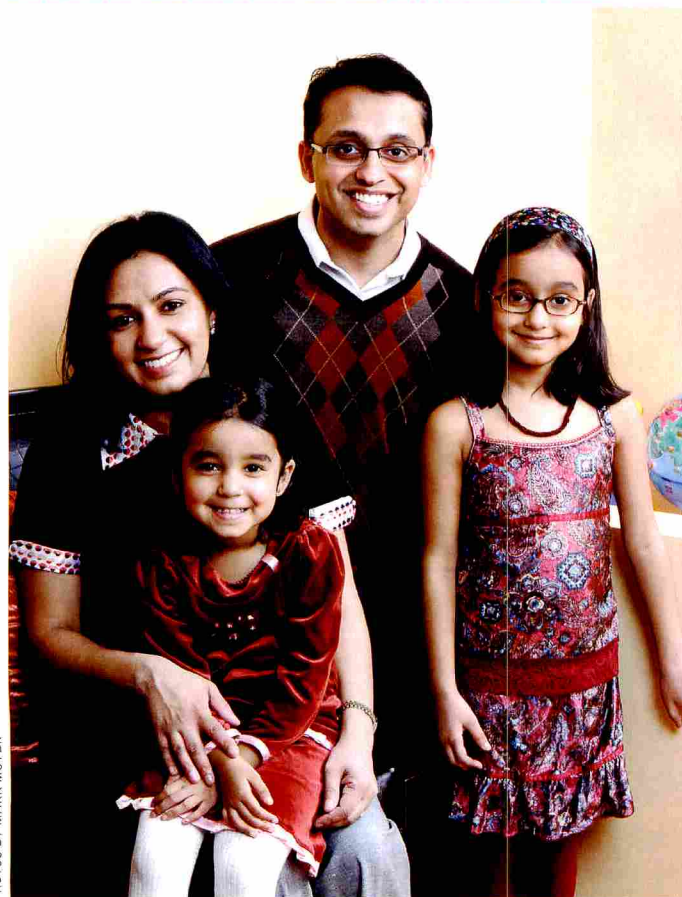
Dr. Naik is a native of North Carolina. For both her undergraduate degree and dental school studies, she attended the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and graduated in 1998. Dr. Naik completed an advanced education in general dentistry residency at the University of Mississippi, and then moved to Northern Virginia, where she now lives with her husband and two young daughters.

The practice of dentistry was something Dr. Naik became familiar with at a young age. As a high school student, she spent her summers working in several orthodontic practices in her hometown.

Dr. Naik was also drawn toward a career in dentistry because many of these dentists were women. “I am inspired by the fact that dentistry is a good field for women,” she said.

Dr. Naik worked as an associate in various dental practices for nine

Dr. Naik with husband Manish and daughters Sonia and Meera



PHOTOS BY MARK MOYER



Degrees and certificates

years before she began thinking of opening her own practice.

“The primary reason that I wanted to open my own office was that I wanted to practice dentistry in a way that was different than some of the places where I had worked by developing a more personal relationship with my patients. I prefer the ‘old-fashioned’ approach to dentistry, in which patients and their families come to me for their oral care throughout their lifetimes,” she told *Doctor of Dentistry*.

A few of the dentists she worked with during her years as an associate had large multipractice groups that often seemed to focus primarily on cosmetic services.

“In my office, I do offer cosmetic services like teeth whitening and porcelain veneers. However, I believe my role as a dentist is to provide information and education to my patients on what is available, not hard selling services. After that, it’s really up to them to decide whether any optional service is right for them or not,” said Dr. Naik.

“I wanted to have a smaller office of my own, one where I could control every aspect of the practice. It is more personable to me and gives me the opportunity to have a relationship with each of my patients. Even spending a few minutes with each patient is conducive to this personal touch, and I think it keeps patients coming back,” she said.

Dr. Naik also wanted to create a community-based practice where kids were welcomed from an early age, not only for dental services, but also to start learning about how to take care of their teeth, in order to avoid major problems later in adulthood. And as a mother and a dentist, she is aware of the importance of good

oral health care for children that starts early and sets a good tone for future visits.

As her own daughters, Sonia and Meera, grow, Dr. Naik is getting more involved in the local schools. She participates in the elementary school PTA, and will visit five different schools during Dental Health Month to deliver a presentation on oral care to children ages 5-10 years old. "My suggestion to parents is to make sure that the child's first visit to the dentist is a good one. I've often encouraged parents to bring their children with them during their appointments. We let them sit in the chair, I take a quick look in their mouth, show them all the different tools and then let them pick out a treat." Dr. Naik added, "With a good first visit, children develop a comfort level and trust with coming to the dentist, which leads to good oral health throughout their lives."

To welcome and encourage parents and children to come to her office, Dr. Naik has created a special section in her waiting room for children. Filled with toys, books and comfortable chairs, this area is dedicated to making the children she treats feel welcome and comfortable while they are in her office.

And for both her young and old patients, Dr. Naik has also equipped the waiting room with a television and a computer that



Dr. Naik is passionate about kids' oral health.

patients can use to browse the Internet or check e-mails while they are waiting to be seen.

GETTING STARTED

In November 2008, Dr. Naik opened the doors to her new practice, which delivers distinctive service and personalized care to residents of Northern Virginia and the surrounding areas of Vienna, McLean and Tyson's Corner.

Dr. Naik instills good brushing habits early.



PHOTOS BY MARK MOYER



Neil Fazli, President of Gateway Development, Inc.

The challenges of starting her own practice were considerable, according to Dr. Naik, but they are not unlike the challenges faced by anyone starting her own business.

“Our primary goal right now is creating awareness that we’re finally open,” she said. “The challenges we’ve had are the typical challenges everyone faces when they start a business, and these revolve around getting the word out about your new business. We are still experimenting with different marketing channels to find the one that is most cost effective,” Dr. Naik added.

Yet, to a large degree, the challenges of starting a new practice may have been partially mitigated by the very involved approach Dr. Naik and her husband, Manish, took as the practice was being built. “Surprisingly, we’ve had very few major challenges as we’ve started up this practice, because we’ve been very conscious of taking a very ‘hands-on’ approach from the start,” explained Manish. “From the beginning, Dr. Naik and I have been actively involved in everything, from the design of the office to working with our contractors and seeing that everything went the way we planned.”

Manish further explained that even while the physical build-out of the practice was underway, either he or Dr. Naik visited the site every other day to make sure that progress was going as anticipated.



One of the keys to the successful creation of the practice was the partnership between Dr. Naik and Neil Fazli of Gateway Development, Inc., who served as their general contractor. Dr. Naik said, “The most important decision we had to make was who was going to serve as our general contractor. We selected Neil with this important role based on his experience, as well as a comfort level that we would work well together. We have been very happy with Neil’s commitment and dedication to his work, and that is reflected in the quality of our office.”

Anyone who walks through the doors of Dr. Naik’s practice will immediately notice the comfortable and welcoming atmosphere she painstakingly created. The décor is modern, uncluttered and in welcoming, soft earth tones. Many of the walls in the practice are made of glass, which makes for a lighter and more open atmosphere, similar to the modern residential architecture both Dr. Naik and her husband prefer.

“We took elements of what we love in our home and brought them into our design for the office,” said Dr. Naik. “It’s more contemporary, with a lot of curved elements and glass and flowing layout. We worked very closely with the architects to make sure we achieved the exact look and atmosphere I wanted.”



Left to right: Meridian Valverde, receptionist; Lawanna Broch, hygienist; Dr. Naik; Manish Naik, husband and Office Manager

A STAFF THAT'S LIKE FAMILY

Another area in which Dr. Naik has been blessed is her staff. She currently employs two part-time hygienists, one receptionist and two part-time assistants. All members of the staff have been dental health care specialists for many years, and they have all worked together in the past — something Dr. Naik is particularly thankful for.

“We are very family oriented, not just in our approach to our patients, but amongst the staff as well. We are all very comfortable with each other because we’ve worked together for so long. And the patients can sense that, and I think they appreciate it,” she said.

Her husband agrees. “Dr. Naik has been able to recruit and have a staff that she has worked with in the past who not only enjoy working with her, but also share her view of community and family-oriented dentistry. They also love being part of growing a new office. Dr. Naik now has a staff that she’s worked with for the past 10 years. It has made a world of difference,” he explained.

“These comfortable relationships help to build the culture of the practice, and they help make everyone feel more comfortable when they are here,” he added.

TECHNOLOGICALLY SAVVY

In her practice, Dr. Naik offers general dentistry services, including checkups, pediatric care, TMJ therapy, bruxism therapy, athletic mouth guards, periodontal care and extractions. Cosmetic

Patients are greeted by Meridian Valverde.



PHOTOS BY MARK MOYER

services are also included in Dr. Naik's offerings, and these include porcelain veneers and Lumineers, teeth whitening (Zoom), cosmetic bonding and contouring, Invisalign and even smile makeovers. Restorative procedures at Dr. Naik's office include tooth-colored fillings, crowns, inlays and onlays, bridges and restoration of dental implants.

Dr. Naik has invested in state-of-the-art technology to increase patient comfort, as well as to aid in the diagnosis and delivery of state-of-the-art dental care. Intraoral cameras are available in each operatory to ensure that patients can see what the doctor sees. Dr. Naik has invested in monitors in each operatory room, and these monitors are used to display the images to each patient. Dr. Naik involves her patients in every aspect of their care and discusses her findings and suggested therapies with them.

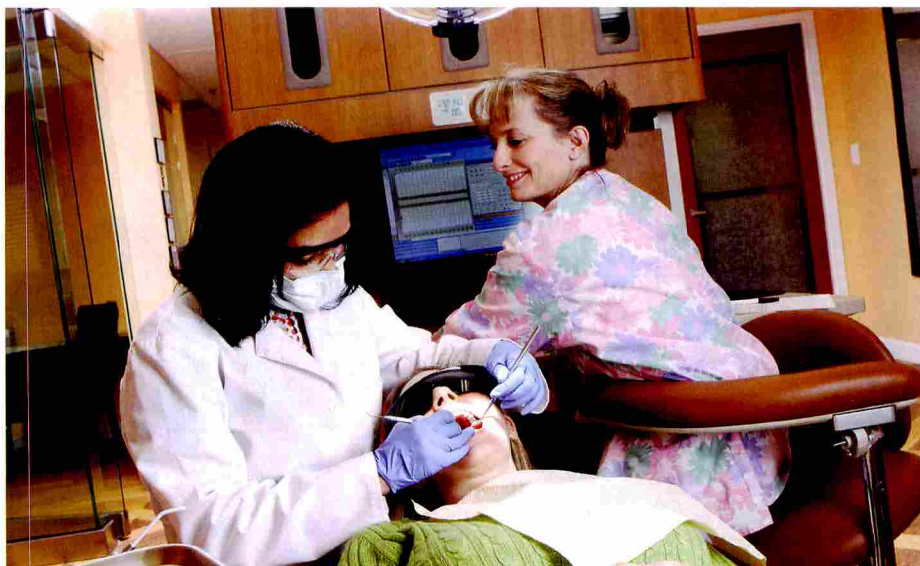
Dr. Naik's office is a paperless one, a decision that was made as the practice was built.

"There's no sense anymore, with technology as advanced as it is, to have paper files," said Manish.

Patients still fill out some standard forms on their initial visit, but then the information is inputted into computer files, and the forms are either shredded or given back to the patients for their records.

All claims are filed electronically, and most patient follow-up and communications are done via e-mail, if at all possible.

"Our view is that technology should make things easier, and where it does, we invest in it," said Manish. "Everyone is becoming more and more comfortable with technology, especially where we live in Northern Virginia. In fact, many patients now expect the latest



Dr. Naik and Lawanna Broch work as a perfect team.

technology with all of their health care providers. While Dr. Naik evaluates the latest technology improvements from a clinical standpoint, my evaluation is mostly on whether the advancement is more efficient or makes for a better patient visit. When the technology is worth investing in, we've invested in it. When it's still unproven, we've passed on it."

Dr. Naik has enlisted the help of Manish in various areas of the practice. With his background in business and management, Manish is adept at handling the accounting, insurance billing, collections and the marketing aspects of Dr. Naik's practice.

AIMING FOR GROWTH

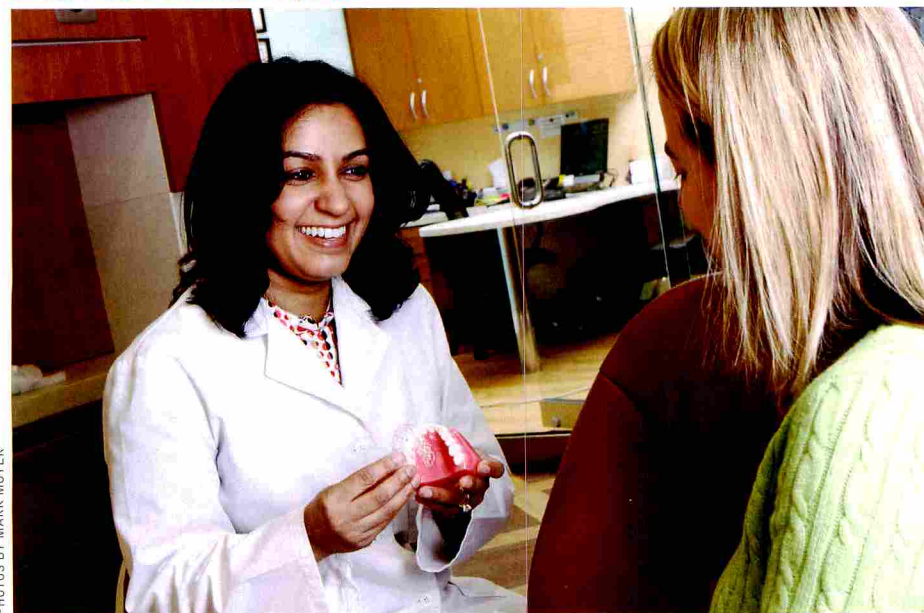
Every aspect of Dr. Naik's practice has been well thought out and executed. Even the location of the practice reflects her forethought for growth and for her patients, and her unerring ability to successfully combine her home and family life with her office life and practice.

"We specifically choose to put our practice in the community in which we live and work. Tyson's Corner is going to change a lot in the future and we're excited to be part of that growth," said Dr. Naik

"My goal in starting my own practice was to build an office where patients would feel welcome, where a lifelong relationship would be built and where children feel just as welcome as their parents," concluded Dr. Naik. From the looks of things, Dr. Naik is well on her way to fulfilling her dream!

For further information about Dr. Naik, visit her website at www.pritinaikdds.com. For further information about Gateway Development, Inc., call (703) 242-7071 or visit their website at www.gatewaydevelopmentinc.com. ■

Dr. Naik discusses cosmetic options.



PHOTOS BY MARK MOYER