

DOCTOR *of* DENTISTRY

Special Feature



Dr. Harout Barsemian

Founder of Apex Endodontics Is
Renowned for Trendsetting Techniques
in Business and in Patient Care

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By Julien Sharp

Dr. Barsemian, an endodontist who owns Apex Endodontics, with offices in Morristown and Westfield, NJ, originally wanted to follow his brother into medicine. However, his brother (who is five years older) knew the younger Dr. Barsemian — perhaps better than the latter did himself: “He knew my character and my intensity, and my penchant for leadership,” recalls Dr. Barsemian, “and he told me that I should look into dentistry in order to have my own business, and a lifestyle more suited to my temperament.”

The elder Dr. Barsemian was also responsible for encouraging his younger brother not only to choose dentistry, but to specialize, pointing out to him that, as a child, Dr. Barsemian was an avid painter and drawer, and endodontics certainly would “draw” on his innate abilities. “I also had a mentor in Montréal — Dr. Leon Lemian — who

was the head of the endodontic division at University of Montréal,” Dr. Barsemian said. “He saw my work and he basically insisted I pursue endodontics. So, two people — my brother and my mentor — really garnered me into the specialty, and even though I actually liked all aspects of general dentistry, I am glad they encouraged me to specialize.”

After that encouragement, following his graduation from dental school at the University of Montréal (he was raised in the province of Québec), Dr. Barsemian began a two-year endodontics residency at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ). He met his wife during this time, and this was one of the contributing factors to his decision to practice in the United States.

Following his residency, Dr. Barsemian practiced at an endodontic

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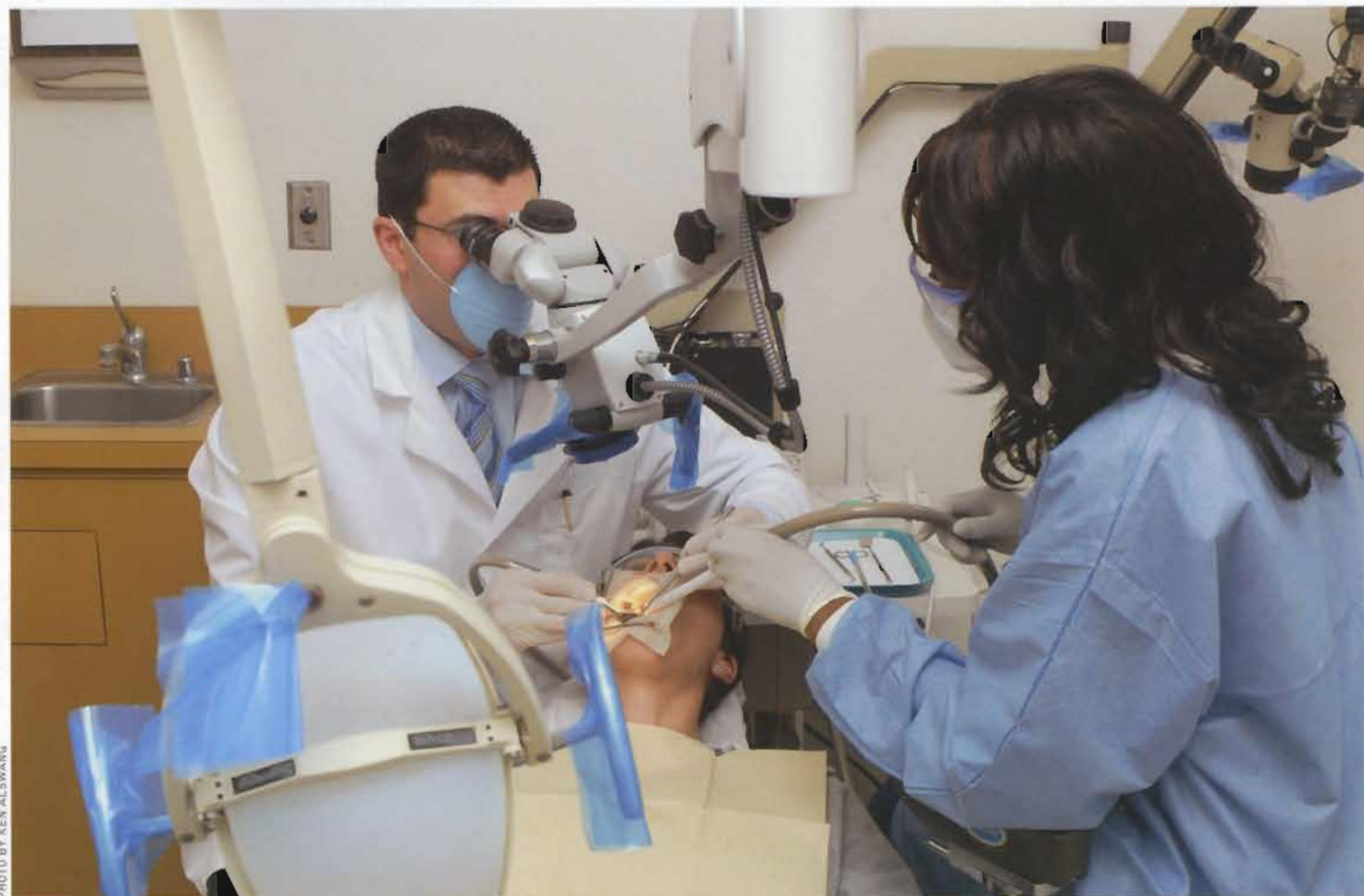




PHOTO BY KEN ALSWANG

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group in south Jersey. He remained with the practice for three years and was made a partner during that time. Eventually, however, his leadership tendencies began to pull at him, and he dissolved his partnership in order to found his own practice in Morristown in 2005.

Within a year, Dr. Barsemian had established his practice to the point where he was ready to expand. At that point he approached Dr. Morton Wertheimer, who had been a practicing endodontist in the Morristown area for over 40 years, to see if he wanted to join practices. Dr. Wertheimer agreed, and the two practices were combined to form Apex Endodontics in 2006, with the new practice located in the building where Dr. Wertheimer had been practicing.

The practice continued to grow, and in June of 2006, Dr. Barsemian acquired a second office in Westfield, NJ. Dr. Barsemian divides his time between the two offices, while Dr. Wertheimer practices exclusively at the original location. As the practice has grown, so has the staff. Apex Endodontics now has five full-time staff, including dental assistants and office personnel, and it is in Dr. Barsemian's plans to hire a new associate in the near future.

RAPID, REFERRAL-BASED GROWTH

One of the main reasons for the rapid growth of Apex Endodontics is the increasing amount of referrals from general dentists. Dr. Barsemian has been well received by the dental community and is gaining increasing exposure as the "go to" person for complicated root canals, or those with complications (separated instruments or posts), or those needing re-treatments.

"General dentists do 70% of the root canals, but endodontists primarily work with the 30% who have serious issues," comments Dr. Barsemian. "Most — or nearly all — referrals come from general dentistry colleagues."

Endodontics has a unique niche in the dental care industry.

"Endodontics is, to me, the part of dentistry where you can really put a combination of one's manual dexterity, imagination/visualization skills, biological and anatomical knowledge to work in a very small environment," states Dr. Barsemian.

"Although microscopes provide tremendous aid in illuminating and visualizing the pulp chamber and beyond, we still need to have imagination and enhanced tactile sensitivity to move around blockages, ledges or steep curves.

"Conventional endodontic therapy has a very high success rate. Time and again, in recent studies it was proven to be in the high 95%, but sometimes, root canal therapy has limitations, such as extreme calcification due to trauma, a large post, recent crown or bridge, anatomical restrictions such as multiple branching or even iatrogenic factors like a separated instrument. In these cases, apicoectomy becomes the appropriate treatment option," Dr. Barsemian proclaims.

Once again, the microscope becomes very handy. During the surgery, the bone crypt is kept to a minimum, thus promoting faster healing and less postoperative discomfort. Also, the differentiation between the bone and the apex is clearly identified, narrow isthmuses and multiple root canals can be cleaned and shaped with the aid of the ultrasonic instruments. And finally, the root end cavity is tightly sealed with a hydrophilic biocompatible material, the MTA.

According to Dr. Barsemian, "Endodontists are the best qualified to perform these types of surgeries." Dr. Barsemian learned to use all of these advanced instruments in his residency.

TECHNOLOGICAL TRENDS IN ENDODONTICS

There has been a huge improvement in the instrumentation that is used in endodontics. These trends include the use of rotary instruments that can accelerate the treatment and also provide better results by allowing Dr. Barsemian to perform procedures in a more consistent and predictable manner.

Dr. Barsemian also has state-of-the-art ultrasonic units and instruments available. Ultrasonic instruments assist in breaking through calcifications and provide better visualization when he is working in small areas. "But, by far, the biggest improvement is the use of operating microscope," asserts Dr. Barsemian. "The instrument provides a very bright light and huge magnification. What you can see you can treat — and this instrument makes everything so visible you cannot really miss anything."

The microscope allows Dr. Barsemian to clearly identify blockages (including separated instruments, which can occur during a root canal procedure). The microscope provides views deep down in the canal where the instrument is lodged. He can then vibrate the instrument or other blockage with ultrasonic tips and remove it.

In the past this would not have been possible, but it is a basic procedure for new generation of endodontists. "We do our training with the microscopes from the start, so we are very efficient with them," explains Dr. Barsemian. "The use of this instrument is literally a principle — not just an accessory. It is like my arm, rather than merely a tool I choose to use now and again." For this reason, both offices of Apex are fully equipped with the microscopes and other advanced technological equipment available today.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Dr. Barsemian is in the process of becoming a board-certified endodontist.

"It's a very long and exhausting process, consisting of three stages, where you [are] judged by your peers," he states. "Only a very small minority of the endodontists are board certified."

Endodontists are increasingly becoming interested in implant dentistry. Many endodontic programs are training new endodontists in the field of implantology, and that number is increasing all the time. This knowledge can lead to better treatment for the patient. This is because endodontists are widely considered to be the best to judge the ultimate treatment for a tooth, whether straightforward root canal, to re-treatment, to endodontic surgery. "We simply want to do what is the best for the patient . . . we just want to be able to provide them all the options," states Dr. Barsemian.

An excellent example is when a patient presents at an endodontist's office with a fractured tooth. If it is not salvageable, the traditional manner of treatment by the endodontist after an exploratory surgery is to close the flap and then refer the patient to the implantologist, after consulting with the referring doctor. The patient will have to wait several weeks for the gum to heal and then the tooth must be pulled, followed by the implant work. This process requires creating extra flaps, and many weeks of prolonged suffering. However, an endodontist trained in implantology would be able to save three to four weeks of time by doing the implant as soon as the extent of damage to the original tooth is ascertained.

For this reason, Dr. Barsemian plans to undergo specialized train-

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PHOTOS BY KEN ALSWANG



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ing in the field of implantology, and he predicts that eventually it will become a part of the daily routine and procedures at Apex Endodontics — much to the benefit of his patients.

NO TIME FOR 'DOWNTIME'

Even though he runs his two busy offices and ever-growing practice, Dr. Barsemian makes time for family, including his wife and two little boys, Alexander and David, ages 4 and 3, respectively. He also enjoys keeping in touch with his eclectic group of siblings: in addition to his older brother, who is now practicing medicine in California, Dr. Barsemian has a younger brother who is an opera singer in Montréal, and two sisters, one of whom lives abroad in Belgium.

Spending time at work and with family doesn't allow much time for his favorite hobby, physical activity. A former semipro basketball player and state-level long-jump champion in Canada, Dr. Barsemian continues his passion for physical fitness activities — however, he must wake up at 5:30 to work out!

When asked what truly sets Apex Endodontics apart, Dr. Barsemian was quick to answer that, in addition to excellent quality of treatment, training of the staff and the newest technological advances available for his patients, the offices do offer a friendly and comforting environment. "It's hard to imagine having a lot of laughs at an endodontist's office . . . but we make sure our patients do just that!" smiles Dr. Barsemian. ■

Apex Endodontics is located at 2 Maple Avenue Morristown, NJ (973) 538-5660 and 590 Westfield Avenue Westfield, NJ (908) 233-5588.