

# What's Up,

by Kyle Patton, associate editor, *Orthotown* magazine

## Your exclusive look inside top Townie Dr. David Harnick's practice in east Albuquerque

Orthodontists spend most of their waking hours in their practices, so they usually don't get many opportunities to see what it's like inside another doc's office. *Orthotown* magazine's recurring Office Visit profile offers a chance for Townies to meet their peers, hear their stories, and get a sense of their practice protocols.

In this issue, we introduce Dr. David Harnick, an award-winning Albuquerque doc who has spent the past 42 years in dentistry, 30 of those years as an orthodontist. Harnick is a frequent contributor to the Orthotown.com message boards (3,000+ posts), and has served as a wealth of experience and information for his peers. It's no wonder why he's won multiple awards in his community and why his daughter is finishing up her residency to follow in her father's footsteps to become a third-generation dentist.



# Doc?



## Tell us the story of how you became an orthodontist.

In 1979, I developed TMJD with a clicking/pain of the left joint. I went to the orthodontist who I always referred to and he suggested removing the UL4 to make my left side Class I and give me canine rise. That was the treatment back then. But my upper midline was already to my left and this would leave the UR1 in the center. So, I started taking classes wherever I could find them to learn more about TMJD and orthodontics. This led me to learn alternative techniques in orthodontics, such as Crozats, functional appliances and even Frankels.

I learned how to place brackets and use straight wire from the AOS, an organization to teach general dentists orthodontics. I treated myself with Crozats and have been pain/click free now for more than 37 years.

I got so obsessed with orthodontics that I applied to the University of the Pacific and was lucky enough to be accepted. Pacific was a very thorough progressive program and met my needs perfectly. The hard part was going back to school with a family in Albuquerque. I flew home 94 weekends in the two years. I worked on Saturdays to make ends meet.

**You have a pretty varied background. You worked as a general dentist for number of years before you decided to go into ortho. Now you're an ABO board-certified orthodontist who has earned many distinctions and awards in your career. What's been your driving force in all your endeavors?**

I have always found that taking courses and learning new techniques has made me not only a better practitioner, but also more excited about dentistry and a more successful businessman. I was in a partnership that didn't work out and at age 59 started all over again in a part of town I knew nobody. I forgot how hard it is to start an ortho practice!



## Coming soon: Tips to maximize clear-aligner business

Dr. David Harnick calls clear aligners the "workhorse" of his practice—and has agreed to share some advice based on his years of expertise. Look for his article in the October 2017 issue of **Orthotown!**

## OFFICE HIGHLIGHTS

### Names & Credentials:

**David J. Harnick, DDS, MS, Master in the AGD, Diplomate of the ABO**

Practice Name: **Harnick Orthodontics**

Graduated From: **University of Pacific Orthodontic Program, 1988**

### Practice Location:

**Albuquerque, New Mexico**

Practice Size: **4,500 square feet, 3,000 square feet**

Staff: **Two front desk, two chairside, one treatment coordinator**

Website: **Harnickorthodontics.com**



## TOP PRODUCTS

**Invisalign:** A must for practice growth and patient satisfaction. It has been the driving force for my own practice growth

**Itero scanner:** I could not think of practicing without a scanner. Scanners are very cost effective and are the wave of the future.

**Opal Seal:** This primer/sealer not only has glass ionomer but is fluorescent with a black light. No more adhesive left after removing brackets or attachments.

**Opal brackets:** Unfortunately, they are a thing of the past but I did enjoy the precision of how they were made and the ease of finishing my cases

**Orthosynetics:** By outsourcing insurance and billing my office can focus on patient care. Also, having a full-time practice management consultant along with a marketing department has improved my practice and helped it grow.

I used the time to advance my knowledge base. I took a mini residency at UCLA in sleep breathing disorders and I attended the McLaughlin two-year course. Both made me a better practitioner and helped grow my practice. I also spent as much time as I could in learning the Invisalign system. I was one of the original doctors certified in 1999 and was part of their alpha group.

However, I found the system to be too difficult to achieve quality results. I was determined to master the appliance and have taken every single course available on the website, attended every regional meeting I could, and have not missed a summit. I now find it to be the workhorse in my office.

### Walk me through your average day in the office.

I really enjoy going to work each day. My first patient arrives around 8 a.m. (varies slightly with each location). I see between 35–60 patients each day. I am never rushed. We schedule ample time for each procedure. All staff are cross trained so if I do need some extra help I can get it. With Invisalign, most appointments are under 10 minutes and some take less than five minutes. I generally see the Invisalign patients myself and the assistants see the fixed patients. I have plenty of time to go on Orthotown!

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I do not believe in seeing the after-school rush. I have very few after school appointments and leave the office very close to 4:30 p.m. each day that I work Monday through Thursday. My daughter, Kari, who will be joining the practice after she graduates from OHSU's ortho program, shadowed me one morning and we had lunch. I asked her what she thought of how the day went. She looked at me and said I am a goofball. What a great compliment. Doing a great job, having fun with your staff and patients is what it is all about.

#### **What is your practice philosophy? How has your philosophy changed over the years (if it has)?**

I think my practice philosophy has changed in the 42 years I've been in dentistry. For the first 11 years, it was as a general practitioner. For the last three decades, I've been an orthodontist. At first I was more focused on the business' growth and doing fast-paced work.

I did not want to burnout so I have chosen a completely different way of practicing. I chose to hire Orthosynetics. Outsourcing is my new approach. I have about two fewer employees on site. A team of five is easily manageable. As you add on team members, issues can multiply exponentially. So, I outsource all billing and insurance. I outsource all retainers (easy to do with a scanner). No noise or mess from pouring models. No extra people to do lab work. No running around to make a retainer on time.

I choose strategies to reduce stress. Now this comes with a cost. My overhead is higher than most but I could never go back to the old way. My net is higher than most. My way is just a different way of doing things.

One of the local magazines in Albuquerque voted you “best orthodontist” several times in recent years. What do you do in your practice that sets you apart from others?

I do anything for my patients. I can’t remember any complaint that I didn’t do my best for a patient. For example, with Invisalign. I will do as many aligners and refinements it takes. I literally outlast the picky patients until they say no more. Someone breaks a retainer, even a few years out of treatment, I will replace it, sometimes at no charge.

What’s an aspect of ortho that never ceases to amaze you?

I think technology is changing orthodontics forever, just as it is in many fields. There probably have been more advances in the past 15 years than there were in the first 100.

Seems like orthodontics runs in the family. Your daughter, Kari, will be joining your practice in January of 2018. What does that mean to you?

Well in one word—everything. My dad was a dentist so she is a third generation in the profession. She surprised me at the age of 16 and asked me if she could become my partner. I really thought



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## OTHER PRODUCTS

### **Appliances (any)**

- Invisalign
- Harnick Sectional Distalizer (Class II and III)

### **Bonding agents**

- Opal Bond MV (Ultradent)

### **Brackets**

- American Master Series (American Orthodontics)

### **Chairs**

- A-dec

### **Cements**

- Unitek Multi-Cure Glass Ionomer Band Cement (3M)

### **Primer**

- Opal Seal (Ultradent)

### **Practice management**

- Orthosynetics

### **Technology**

- iTero Element Intraoral Scanner
- EyeSpecial C-II 9 (Shofu Dental Corporation)

### **Wires**

- G&H Orthodontics

she would be a CPA like her mom. She has a great attitude, worked very hard in college (got her degree in dental hygiene) and dental school. OHSU has really trained her in traditional orthodontics and I have been able to supplement it with the aid of texting and emailing. I can't wait to see what kind of orthodontist she becomes.

### **What do you find is the best to market your practice? Were you always successful, or was it trial and error?**

Up until recently it has always been easy for me. My general practice grew to be very large, so starting my ortho practice out of school went seamlessly. This new one that I started eight years ago was slightly more of a challenge. Hard to go from being very busy to seeing a few patients a day. A lot of internal marketing. Now I have two locations and a very successful practice. The practice is exactly how I want it. I also have been positioning for future growth with my daughter.

### **What has orthotown.com and Orthotown magazine done for your professional life? For your social life? What is your favorite feature?**

I started posting on dentaltown.com's orthodontic category about 18 years ago. I had bought one of the first Windows-based practice-management systems and didn't know how to type! So, I needed to practice and Dentaltown needed an orthodontist to answer questions. I was in on the start of Orthotown.com but drifted. When I started my new practice I one day checked in on it. Since then I have been hooked and can't imagine practicing without it. My knowledge base has expanded dramatically from the great posts. I've met several docs who recognized me at the AAO.

### **Give us a snapshot of your life outside of your work.**

I love tennis and play three or four times per week. I play in several leagues at the 4.5 level. In addition, I work out every night for at least a half hour, even if I have played tennis. I am hooked on the UNM Lobo basketball team. I keep my life simple. On weekends my wife and I go on three-mile hikes.

### **What advice do you have for ortho students still in residency?**

In most likelihood, your residency is barely enough to get started. Learn, learn and then learn some more. It has been so long for me and a different era, I am not sure I can give any more advice. To me there is always room for one more good one. I got a taste of starting from scratch again and you really need a positive attitude. Do not buck current trends. Be a leader. ■



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