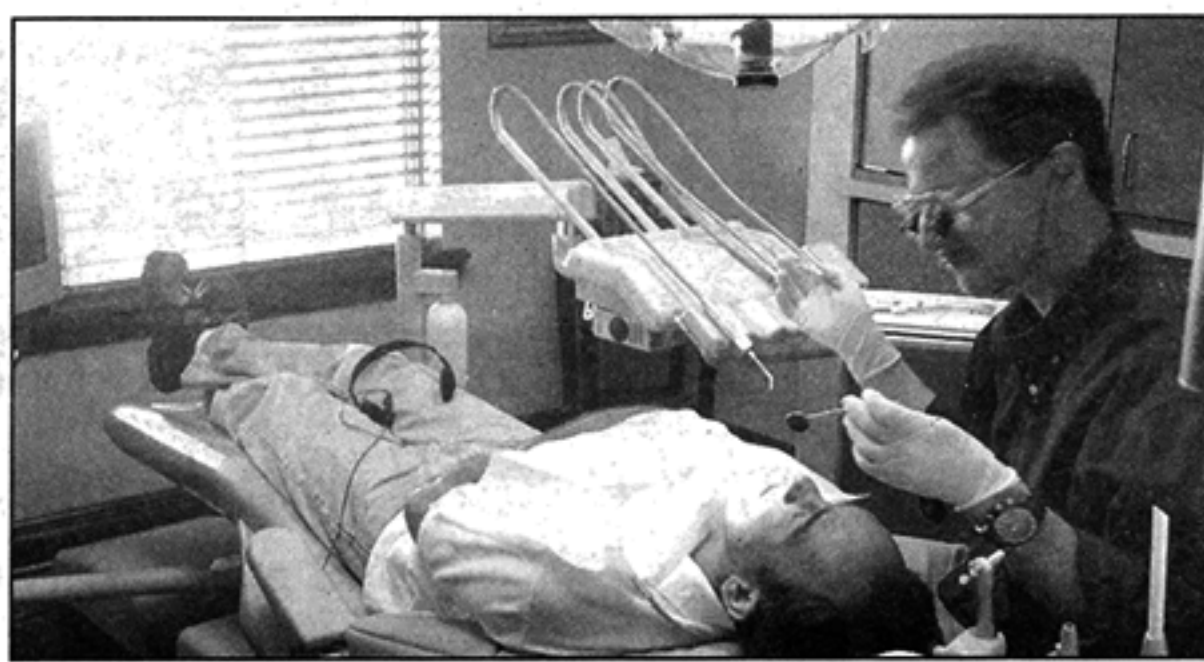


With comfortable furniture, plush rugs and detail-oriented accents, the waiting room gives patients the feeling that they are visiting at a friend's house.



Dr. Michaelson performs work on a patient in one of the Spa Dentistry treatment rooms.

SURE TO MAKE YOU SMILE

New spa trend in dentistry offers unique pampering

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Cozy furnishings help create a sense of security, smells of aromatherapy candles invite guests to relax and, just as you might expect from any good host, refreshments like warm muffins, energy bars, juice and coffee are all offered up in generous supply. About to embark on an anything-but-conventional trip to the dentist, one senses serenity when entering the office of Dr. Gary Michaelson. It's a feeling that's more reminiscent of your last visit to a good friend's home than a previous trip for dental work. Both inviting and innovative, Spa Dentistry is the trendiest form of oral care to grace East Orlando. And patients who partake in its pleasures are in store for more than just cleanings and fillings.

"Our niche is cutting-edge dentistry in an environment that's comforting. We're not lacking in the technical side of things either," said office manager, Christina Michaelson.

Spa Dentistry is not an exclusive concept, though it may be the only office of its kind in East Orlando. "It is a current trend in cosmetic dentistry that works to make the dental experience more comfortable for patients," said Christina about this practice that incorporates advanced training in dentistry with indulgent spa services.

While all treatment rooms look out to individual garden views, there are a number of additional guiltless

pleasures available for patients to enjoy while work is being done. Patients are given preview booklets of DVD and CD selections from which they can choose a selection. All treatment rooms are equipped with personal television and audio setups so that patients can view a movie or just let the sounds of some tranquil music take them away. Should they so desire, patients are also presented with warm lavender wraps for the neck, herbal eye packs, lumbar pillows, heated back massagers and shiatsu neck massagers. Taking it a step further, the use of intra-oral cameras and digital imaging allow patients to see exactly what the doctor sees and thus gives them the opportunity to preview their treatment options.

Michaelson has been practicing dentistry in East Orlando ever since he graduated from the University of Florida dental school back in 1986. Though Spa Dentistry has been open at its current location near the intersection of Alafaya Trail and East Colonial Drive for the past six months, Michaelson and his staff previously served clients out of a conventional dentist's office across the street for about 12 years. When they decided to make the move to Spa Dentistry, they maintained most of their clients but gained new ones too.

"People love it. They can't believe it," proclaimed Christina of the unique business. "Obviously the

difference in look is a big draw for patients. They like the homey sort of welcome feeling that they get here."

Teeth whitening remains one of the most popular services offered at the spa.

"It's huge right now, probably because it appeals to every market. We have a whitening program that is used in Hollywood. Jennifer Anniston and Brad Pitt use it. It's a lamp and chemical procedure," she said.

Other high-end cosmetic services offered at Spa Dentistry include porcelain veneers, crowns, acrylics, dentures and cosmetic work requiring specialized aesthetics. For example, someone who just wants a metal filling would probably be happy going to a conventional dentist because Spa Dentistry only offers white fillings.

Christina said that pricing for specialized services is competitive with other dental offices, emphasizing that the spa offerings and home atmosphere are really more of a bonus intended to complement the high-quality services offered.

"Dentistry is an art that requires an artistic hand," she said.

And artistry is reflected all throughout the facility, from the spa's features created by Michaelson to the décor designed by Christina.