

PRACTICE SUCCESS WITH A-DEC

Issue 2

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Makeover Winners on New Trajectory



Dr. Murcko and patient in old treatment room.

Cover: Drs. Murcko and Strcula with their new equipment from A-dec's Treatment Room Makeover.

“We love the new setup for obvious reasons, but even more important is how excited the patients are.”

“We knew this would be great, but we had no idea just how amazing,” says Dr. Juliette Murcko, who with her husband—and partner practitioner—Dr. Jason Strcula, transformed a 48-year-old operatory after winning the A-dec Treatment Room Makeover Contest.

“We won a lot more than a new treatment room,” says Dr. Murcko. “With all the history of this place, it’s as if our future gained a whole new trajectory.”

Murcko, Murcko & Strcula, located in the heart of Pittsburgh’s old Lawrenceville district, was founded by Juliette’s father, Dr. Edward Murcko, in 1961. Tucked between a 70-year-old pharmacy and gourmet pizzeria, the dental office greets the sidewalk with the type of charm that is as sweet as it is genuine. Its wood door and brick exterior have been welcoming the neighborhood for nearly half a century. The practice’s treatment rooms, office and front waiting area make the most out of a floor plan that totals slightly more than 900 square feet.

After being chosen as a grand-prize winner, the husband-and-wife team worked with A-dec and dealer Benco to outfit their primary treatment room with a new A-dec 500 patient chair, delivery system, electric handpieces, ultrasonic instrument, and cabinetry.

“There isn’t anything that hasn’t been impacted for the better,” says Dr. Murcko. “The ease and efficiencies of the chair and delivery system, for instance, means we’re able to treat patients in a more relaxed environment. A more relaxed environment translates to better care.”

The couple’s most dramatic revelation? “Our day-to-day is just more gratifying,” says Dr. Murcko. “We’ve gained a whole new level of appreciation for how much of a difference technology makes.” And aside from the overall success of a thoughtful solution, explains Dr. Strcula, “the new electric handpieces have been a bonus surprise—they’re incredible.”

“The experience really opened our eyes,” says Dr. Murcko, who worked alongside her father for four years before his retirement in 2007. “We knew my dad’s equipment was old, but Jason and I have always had a lot of respect for everything he’d accomplished and his attention to detail. His lifetime practice focused on caring for his patients, which is ultimately what this is all about.”

Within two months from when the practice was selected for the makeover, Drs. Murcko and Strcula had to say goodbye to Dr. Ed Murcko’s iconic patient chair—a cherry red 1958 Ritter, no less. “My dad took such great care of everything, saying goodbye to his old chair and metal cabinet was bitter-sweet,” says Dr. Murcko. “It was time, though. We all knew it.”

And now, there’s no looking back.

Insight into Drs. Murcko and Strcula's success

Excerpts from an interview with Drs. Murcko and Strcula shortly following their treatment room makeover.

A-dec: From what we understand, the upgrades to your office came at a very good time.

Juliette: Definitely. It further validated that we belong here in this neighborhood, in the same office where my father treated patients for nearly 50 years. We won a lot more than a new treatment room. With all the history of this place, it's as if our future gained a whole new trajectory.

Jason: The improvements had a galvanizing effect on what we want to provide for our patients. Aside from the weight of saying goodbye to some of the old equipment that was so well cared for, there isn't a single downside in what the makeover has meant for us.

A-dec: It sounds as if there was a bit of a journey up to this point.

Juliette: We knew my dad was about to retire. Before I met Jason, I was considering moving to Colorado to work with my sister, also a dentist. I thought, "Why would I leave here when there is this great opportunity?" The neighborhood was going through a wonderful resurgence, and we figured it was an ideal opportunity staring us in the face. We never looked back. We love it. We love our patients and want to believe it's mutual. We can do things at our own pace and, unlike some of Jason's past experience, no one is telling us how much time we need to spend with our patients.

Jason: I've learned what I didn't want. After working with a large group and seeing how that practice was run, I was determined to have a practice to call my own. I wanted to practice dentistry the way I wanted—an operation that completely reflected my values and why I studied dentistry in the first place.



Pictured is the same operatory—before and after Dr. Murcko and Strcula's Treatment Room Makeover.





“Patients get wide-eyed and excited. I’ve heard a few people say, ‘Oh, my gosh, I love these countertops. I want them in my kitchen.’ That’s the truth.”

A-dec: What does your dad think about the makeover?

Juliette: He loves it! He got tears in his eyes when he walked into the room. I think he knew immediately it was a good thing for our future—he understands what the new technology can mean. I think it was also reassuring to him. If that baton hadn’t been fully passed by then, it was now.

Jason: He wanted to know everything about it. He still does, actually. He was here during the installation, asking all kinds of questions, very curious. He couldn’t get enough, immersing himself into how the chair was able to further the practice of dentistry. I really think if he had a chance to sit down and use it, he would—although he’d probably stand up and use it!

Juliette: Dad took very good care of his equipment. He was meticulous! Very detail-oriented about everything, which I think is something he passed on to us, with dentistry and our practice.

Jason: There’s no comparison between our new operator and old. Juliette’s dad practiced stand-up dentistry for 50 years.

A-dec: Any revelations during the past year?

Jason: Absolutely. Even though everything was set up for stand-up dentistry, it would’ve beat me up. Our new equipment came at a perfect time.

Juliette: My revelation is similar in that I now fully appreciate how much of a difference technology makes. Before [the makeover], our facilities weren’t set up for ergonomics or advanced procedures. It was almost as if we were treating patients with one hand tied behind our back. The differences are night and day.

“In general terms, I’m very critical of my work, so when you have something new that’s arguably the best and latest technology—it elevates everything.”

A-dec: So, do you share the room?

Jason: Jule and I have arm wrestling contests to see who gets it. [Laughter.] We share equal time in it.

Juliette: Fortunately, we work and play well together. Seriously, though, who schedules the new room is based on what the patient needs. Longer procedures such as crowns, bridges—things like that get the new and improved operatory.

Jason: And we try to schedule the dental-phobes for that room as well. People who dread going to the dentist love that room. They think that chair is the greatest thing ever.

Juliette: On one hand, Jason and I love the new set up for obvious reasons, but even more important is how excited the patients are. It’s a great feeling when you experience how the patients benefit.

A-dec: Have patients offered their opinions about the improvements?

Jason: Yes, and it’s all positive. A few patients have even told us that the chair has changed the way they feel about dentistry. They are just much more relaxed. I can’t fully explain all the ways our patients have benefited, but I am very, very grateful.

Juliette: More than a few times, we’ve been told—without asking—the chair fits like a glove. The level of comfort takes them to a whole new place.

Jason: The neck and back support is amazing.

Juliette: People have fallen asleep in the chair. That says a lot.

A-dec: Tell me about your patients.

Jason: Our patients are more than just people who get their teeth and gums treated and cared for. They’re friends. We sit and talk and chat about regular things involving real-life, opposed to rushing to fill the chair and getting them in and out.

Jason: We see two-year-olds to a gentleman 100 years young. We cover everybody as best we can.

A-dec: Now that you have your new chair, furnishings and handpieces, does that mean you’re spending more time talking with patients and less time drilling and filling?

Jason: I think that’s an accurate assessment. We’re still seeing the same number of patients, but we spend more quality time, sharing, and talking than drilling and filling.

Juliette: There’s no mystery to the benefits of taking some extra time to explain everything we’re about to do and then talk through procedures as we’re doing them. The relationship between doctor and patient plays a major role in the patient experience. And a good patient experience means healthier people.

Jason: There’s synergy that comes with creating or furthering a positive patient experience. I get energized, which makes me a better dentist.

Juliette: The day-to-day is just more gratifying. And a simple thing like an integrated camera—as an example—helped make us feel more up-to-date—it put us in a situation to see all these other areas we can improve.

A-dec: Can you elaborate a bit?

Jason: In general terms, I’m very critical of my work, so when you have something new that’s arguably the best and latest technology—it elevates everything. It’s like tennis, for instance. You always play better, it seems, when your opponent is better than you. Skills rise to the level of the play. With vastly improved equipment, you can’t help but be invigorated to do better work, and to keep pushing.

Juliette: Here’s an example: my crown preparations get far better margins. It’s significant. Not only is it very satisfying to be able to do that for a patient, but it makes me a happier person, it really does. I know that sounds silly, but...

A-dec: You're using the electrics for high-speed applications?

Juliette: We're using the electrics every day for composite restorations and crown preps. It's so much quieter for removing old fillings. No exaggeration: the power is like a knife through butter. Amazing. It so quickly and easily removes old fillings and tooth structure. It's wonderful. There is so much less arm and hand fatigue. I can't say enough good stuff about it. I think we want more!

Jason: Without a doubt, I wish we could get electrics in the other treatment room. That's a no brainer.

A-dec: Doctors respond differently about the circumference or width of the handpiece. What are your thoughts?

Juliette: I have smaller hands, so it was one of my initial concerns when I first held an electric handpiece. Now, though, I realize that the amount of smooth power far outweighs the idea that it's too fat.

Jason: Plus, I think we all acclimate quicker than we think.

Juliette: The bigger point is this: people probably don't realize—and I was one who was a little skeptical about the thickness of the handpiece—that the preps go so smoothly and quickly that it's never in my hand long enough for fatigue to be a concern.

A-dec: Is it true that your improvements might be helping with some of your more dental-phobic patients?

Juliette: Yes, and I'm finding out that air-driven low-speeds are a huge factor among dental-phobes. I'm interpreting here, but they're raving about the electrics. People say, "You mean, you're already done?"

Jason: For some, the sound of a drill is enough to work up a cold sweat. That's been one of the bonus surprises—the electric handpieces have a different sound. They're quieter and smoother. They're incredible.

Juliette: I hear, "Aren't you going to use that same drill you usually use, the one that feels like a jack-hammer?" I say, "I already used it on you." They say, "Oh that's amazing; I didn't even know." When we're excavating decay and use the lowspeed, they don't even notice it anymore. So, it's less traumatic on the patient, which makes our job easier.

Jason: That's probably an under-statement.

A-dec: How else have the new electric handpieces helped?

Jason: I should point out that I knew next to nothing about electrics until this whole contest got started. I was actually a skeptic. A-dec's Mark Frizzell and Benco's

Mike Boychuk and Barb Moorcroft kept raving about the whole electric thing, while I politely didn't say a word. I'd never used it, so I had very little context. How can you miss something you've never experienced? Now it's a whole different story. You just do things so much more efficiently. And then you combine how the chair is set up and ergonomically designed ... the sum of having everything right there at your fingertips! There is less hand and arm strain because of the range of adjustments. The highspeed takes so little effort. Everything works well together. It's just amazing.





Juliette: If I had to pick a favorite part of all this, it's the ergonomics. Because I'm only 5'2", I was at a point where I found myself using my body more, straining at times, figuring out how to compensate this way and that, convincing myself that it was simply what dentists have to do. Part of the job. Now I realize I can move everything to my height and my arm distance and it's now so much more comfortable. My posture is better, my focus is where it needs to be, and I'm more relaxed.

Jason: Before I forget: the endo-handpiece attachment is incredible, too. Rotary endo is new for us, and moving from where we were—hand filing—was like going from horse and buggy to a brand new Mercedes.

Juliette: I agree, and it's amazing how everything is built into that electronic keypad. It blows me away. I asked an endodontist friend of ours: "I promise we're not trying to take away any business, but can you come over and give us a few endo-handpiece pointers?" He was so impressed. He couldn't believe that all of that technology was built into the unit. You just hit that little E button. [Laughs.] And with the rotary: it stops and backs off if I'm using too much apical pressure. Our endo friend was very impressed. And as Jason said, we didn't know what we had until we started using it. Anyway, there's no turning back. Six months later and I still smile at the technology in my hand.

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A-dec: What brings you the most joy having been through this process?

Jason: Like we said, it's the sum of all of the parts. I walk in that room every day and smile. I think we are so lucky and fortunate and just so grateful to A-dec. Everything here is so ... you have to see it and experience it to truly appreciate it. I think it might've even changed my overall attitude and demeanor. All these great things have benefited us in so many ways.

Juliette: Because of the equipment, we ended up putting a whole new floor in the office, which was a dramatic improvement from an aesthetic standpoint. And, of course, the walls were painted with a new color and the artwork was changed. Pretty much the whole room is new. With the great equipment, it's a hundred times better. And the cabinets...

Jason: Everything has been transformed in that room.

Juliette: The cabinets aren't just cabinets, either. Materials and ancillaries are hidden now, which gives the room a much neater, cleaner, and professional appearance. Everything has its own place.

Jason: Patients get wide-eyed and excited. I've heard a few people say, "Oh, my gosh, I love these countertops. I want them in my kitchen." That's the truth.

Juliette: It's true. I never really thought about the impact of getting everything the way we wanted it, but the process and results turned out to be very meaningful. All of our decisions were personal, which is why I think everything ended up so warm and inviting. It's us, an extension of our home. It makes sense because we view our patients as friends and a welcome part of the community.

Jason: Greeting patients feels like having friends over in our home. We spend so much time here, it only made sense to transform our office into a place we want to be.



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A-dec: What does the future hold?

Jason: It's funny because we've always been happy for the five or six years we've been here even with our old equipment. I might've looked at pictures of new equipment in the trade journals or what-have-you, but you just kind of shrug and turn the page—our equipment has been perfectly good for Jule's dad and generations of patients, so why introduce something that felt like a luxury? Why complicate matters? But as soon as we physically saw the chair in person, reclined in it, sat behind it ... the chair, the delivery system, the storage ... we've taken a good thing and moved forward, creating a treatment room that's dramatically better.

Juliette: I don't think we would have been exposed to what's out there had we not visited you in Oregon. The bottom line is that we learned all about everything we needed to improve upon. It says a lot about A-dec. I feel A-dec is a major part of the dental community. You can't mention quality operatories without mentioning A-dec.

Jason: I agree. The experience was so enlightening. I even tell patients how incredible it was to tour the facility and to watch how these units and chairs get manufactured and assembled. And even the education center is amazing. I got a taste of everything. The only thing that was missing—this probably sounds crazy—is how much I wanted to bring patients with me [to the A-dec facility] so I could actually perform procedures. When you actually sit down and use the equipment and see how everything is right there...

Juliette: It just takes a lot of what used to be difficult and makes it easy.

TREATMENT ROOM MAKEOVER '09

Nearly 1,900 doctors across the U.S. and Canada entered a photo of their treatment rooms accompanied by a brief essay on why they deserved a chance at new gear. Fifty doctors were awarded VIP trips to A-dec's headquarters in Newberg, OR.

A-dec is one of the largest dental equipment solutions providers in the world, with a global network of customers and authorized dealers in more than 100 countries. For more information about A-dec, visit a-dec.com or call 1.800.547.1883.