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**Cristina Teixeira, D.D.S.,
M.S., D.M.D., Ph.D.**

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of Interest to Create Ideal Career

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Orthodontist Combines Varied Areas of Interest to Create Ideal Career

By Paul J. Watkins

Cristina Teixeira, D.D.S., M.S., D.M.D., Ph.D., is a driven woman.

She's an orthodontist in private practice — but that's not her full-time job. As an associate professor at New York University College of Dentistry, with a dual appointment in the Department of Orthodontics and the Department of Basic Science and Craniofacial Biology, much of her day is spent teaching and mentoring students. She also conducts full-time

research in her NIH-funded laboratory at NYU. At the end of her day, she sees patients in her orthodontic office. That's her chance to relax, she says, because she considers clinical practice very enjoyable.

Dr. Teixeira opened CTNP Orthodontics, her clinical office, two years ago. At the time, she was working a full-time, seven-day-a-week job as a professor and researcher, but she missed having direct contact with patients. She knew that she

Art, music, movies — a special place



PHOTO BY KEN ALSWANG, AT HOME STUDIOS



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European-design inspired

would need help to make the clinical aspect of her career a reality. She found that help with ac², a health care consulting and management company.

“ac² helped me set up the practice and I don’t think I could have done it without them because of all my responsibilities at NYU. Alana Cueto, the company’s President, was with me through all stages of the construction. They’re still working with me on the daily management of the practice so I can focus on patient treatment and research.”

Dr. Teixeira had a clear vision for her office. It would be a place that would not only feel comfortable for children, adolescents and adults, but also be so inviting that they would look forward to their appointments.

“It was conceived by a senior designer. We have an art director on staff who chooses everything — the music, the magazines, the art, the objects displayed. We show video art in the reception area and there are magazines about literature, art and architecture.

“I wanted a place where the kids *want* to be. Once I check their braces and wires and they’re done with their appointment, they actually sit in the waiting room to see the end of the movie. So, slowly, it’s becoming their special place. It’s certainly not boring. The music is changed every day and the CD cover is displayed on the wall. When patients walk in, they go straight there and check what music is playing that day. I wanted it to be like that: interactive without imposing on them so they slowly find what they’re comfortable with.”

Dr. Teixeira adds that it was equally important that her office be a place she herself enjoys because it’s her refuge after a busy day. “I have this full-time job at NYU, so most of the time it’s after 5:00 or 6:00 that I go to the office, so I have to enjoy it, too, because sometimes it’s a *relief* to get there,” she says with a laugh. “That’s my playground; I have my music ... it’s a relaxed place.”

While old silent movies from the 1920s (Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd) sometimes play in the waiting room, the

technology in the office is state of the art. “We’re paperless and the X-rays and models are digital. I have touchscreens at each unit. Patients enjoy that because we can check before and after progress of their treatment chairside.

“Then, when I take all the records and make my diagnosis, I give them all the records on CD to take home and keep. Kids are doing school projects with their X-ray images. They actually enjoy that.”

TREATMENT PHILOSOPHY

“In terms of treatment philosophy, I do a lot of early intervention because I think it’s an advantage to work with young, preadolescent kids. I think orthodontists can have a negative impact when they’re treating adolescents because these kids are often going through a difficult time, with peer pressure and self-image issues. Sometimes, I feel adding braces is just an added burden on their development. So if we could correct some of these malocclusions earlier, I think it’s to the child’s advantage. In addition, some orthopaedic corrections are only possible at those early ages.

Modern look, high-tech equipment





A mix of antiques and modern surroundings

RESEARCH

Dr. Teixeira says research has always been a strong interest of hers, and she believes it's an advantage to be a clinician doing basic science research. "My research is related to what I do in the clinic because I study bone development and bone growth at the basic level of the signaling molecules controlling the cells. I have other projects related to tissue engineering of bone, trying to make bone out of cartilage, like it happens in our bodies.

"I've been doing a lot of orthodontic-related research, looking at tooth movement in rats, ways to move teeth faster and the role of inflammation in the rate of tooth movement. Another interesting project is using vibration forces to increase bone density of the jaws. So they're very related to what I do clinically even though we're looking at basic signaling molecules and mechanisms."

Just as Dr. Teixeira's research in the laboratory impacts her clinical practice, that research also impacts the way she teaches.

Often, she says, students don't fully understand the evidence supporting certain treatment approaches. "When I lecture and tell them about my and others' research, then they make the connection and understand that it's not just a question of throwing an appliance in a patient's mouth; you need to do it at the right time to get the right result.

"By the end of their residency program, they say, 'It makes sense. Now I know why I'm doing this in the clinic.' And some of them come and thank me. So teaching has been very rewarding for me, too."

WILLING RESOURCE

"Because I do a lot of early treatment, colleagues often ask me questions, and there's a lot of information I can give them based not only on my research, but also on studies I'm familiar with because of the nature of my work at NYU."

Dr. Teixeira wants her dental colleagues to know that she welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with them



Dr. Teixeira considers clinical practice very enjoyable.

on cases. “Orthodontics has more to offer than just a mouthful of braces; it can provide very limited and targeted short therapies to help with restorative rehabilitation by getting teeth into better position. It could help improve the periodontal condition of the patient. Sometimes, there’s an angular defect or severe bone loss and we can slowly extrude the tooth to bring the bone levels up before tooth extraction.

“We also collaborate with endodontists because some of these controlled tooth extrusions need a root canal treatment

to be able to do that. And, of course, we often work with oral surgeons on surgical-orthodontic cases.

“I wish I could interact more with periodontists, pediatric dentists and the restorative dentists, because I could do limited orthodontic treatment and very much improve the outcomes of their cases.”

Dr. Teixeira hopes to start a study group for different specialties so she and other dental professionals can look at multidisciplinary cases and find solutions for their patients. It would provide her with yet another opportunity to combine her passions for learning new things, sharing them with others and putting them into practice.

Cristina Teixeira, D.D.S., M.S., D.M.D., Ph.D., received her Doctor of Dental Surgery degree from the University of Porto (Portugal) in 1992 and worked in oral surgery for a year. Afterward, Dr. Teixeira joined the Skeletal Biology Research Group at the School of Dental Medicine, University of Pennsylvania, with the objective of studying skeletal development. In 1997, she obtained her Certificate of Orthodontics and a master’s degree in oral biology. In 2001, she completed a concomitant D.M.D. and Ph.D. in Developmental Biology at the University of Pennsylvania. She is currently an associate professor at NYU College of Dentistry, with a dual appointment in the Department of Orthodontics and the Department of Basic Science and Craniofacial Biology.

CTNP Orthodontics is located at 79 Hudson Street, Suite 400, in Hoboken, NJ 07030. Call the office at (201) 714-9800. For more information, visit ctnporthodontics.com.

If you would like to learn more about Dr. Teixeira’s publications, please visit her research website at cristinateixeira.com.

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