

A Dentist's Story

Being a dentist is a noble endeavor. It takes a person with passion, integrity, and a legitimate desire to serve others. And it also takes hard work, dedication, and a substantial commitment of time and effort that may seem daunting. You may have experienced this yourself first-hand. You were excited to practice dentistry in the real-world, but worried that the business side of being a great dentist would take up all your time. After all, there are other important things in life – family, friends, hobbies, travel – and you wanted to be sure you could enjoy them too.

Dr. Lucy Opris found herself in just such a situation shortly after getting her start in dentistry. Dr. Opris went to the University of Illinois at Chicago for her undergrad studies, where she double-majored in biology and philosophy. She loved the sciences, particularly biology and the study of the human body. Her passion quickly developed into a desire to go into the medical field.

Dr. Opris knew that being a doctor was a lot of work. She also knew she wanted to get married and start a family. How could she do both, and do both well?

She did some research, and decided dentistry would give her the best opportunity to achieve all her goals. She enrolled at the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Dentistry, where she soon fell in love with dental work. She particularly enjoyed root canals, which she says are “like building a ship in a bottle.”

After graduating, Dr. Opris went into community health. She spent time working with children at the Illinois State Health Department, went on a medical mission to Haiti, and worked at a community health clinic in Peoria. And she absolutely loved it. So far her decision to pursue dentistry was paying off.

But what about her decision to make time for her family?

When she left the Peoria clinic in 2013, Dr. Opris had a six-month-old child and was trying to decide what to do next. She knew starting her own practice would be demanding. She wanted a job where she could practice dentistry during the day and then go home to her family. “Finding the right work/life balance was very important to me,” Dr. Opris said. “As a dentist, working long hours is very taxing, both

physically and mentally, and I didn't want to get burned out, especially with a child at home."

Dr. Opris found what she was looking for when she went to work with Midwest Dental, leading their Pekin, Illinois practice. She started working five days a week, and got to go home at the end of each day instead of worrying about administrative details. "It was like having my own practice, but without the non-clinical responsibilities," she said.

When her husband took a new job that required frequent travel, Dr. Opris found herself needing to be home with her kids more often. She asked if she could move from five to three days a week. Midwest Dental gladly obliged and she practiced at this schedule for nearly a year, until another development required her to add a fourth day. She was nervous that Midwest Dental would frown on another schedule change. Instead, they accommodated her request again with no strings attached.

"I was pleasantly surprised at how willingly Midwest Dental met my scheduling needs," she said. "Thanks to their flexibility, I am happier and more productive than I ever thought I would be in my career."

Dr. Opris also has all the time she needs to be with her family. "My husband and I are avid scuba divers and my schedule allows us to continue going on scuba trips throughout the year," she said. "And I am able to be there for my kids, whether it's for doctor appointments, volunteering for field trips, or daycare pick up. That's important to me"

With Midwest Dental's help, Dr. Opris has gotten everything she wanted out of her career, and out of life. She is a thriving dentist and a loving, attentive wife and mother. "I love having a family-friendly employer," she said. "As a mom, Midwest Dental really works for me."



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