

SPEAR

STUDY CLUB PROFILES IN SUCCESS

“WE HAVE RAISED THE BAR FOR WHAT IS POSSIBLE IN PATIENT CARE.”

PRIORITIES OF A GOOD STUDY CLUB...

I think you have to start with the right frame of mind. It can't just be about networking with referring doctors—

there has to be a real worthwhile educational component for everyone involved. And it's a way to learn from each other. It's about education, and it's also about sharing and collaborating with colleagues. Most of all, it's about

always trying to further our knowledge on patient care. It always comes back to that: “how can we best serve the patient?” The Spear Study Club material, I find, really encourages that kind of thinking and collaboration.

DOUBLING DOWN ON SUCCESS....

We started our first Spear Study Club as soon as it became available. The response was great right off that bat and I knew there were other doctors who would benefit from this as well. But we already had 10 people in the club and we didn't want to get too big—the intimate size of the group is part of its effectiveness—so we started a second Spear club a year later and it's been going great too.

EMBRACING THE SPEAR PHILOSOPHY...

I've known Steve Ratcliff at Spear for some time and of course he is deeply involved with the Study Clubs. And the Scottsdale Center is just a few miles up the road from us so we've all been there and we all knew the quality of what Spear offers. In fact a couple of people who became members of our original group were mentors at the Center, which means they had taken all of the seminars and workshops. They were already well-versed in the Spear philosophy of comprehensive interdisciplinary care. And for me, it was easy to see how this philosophy—taking photos, carefully documenting everything, mounting cases—would be worth exploring with my referring doctors in an informal but systematic way.



Dr. David Barget
PERIODONTIST
Scottsdale, AZ

Two years after becoming a periodontist in 1997, Dr. David Barget joined a well-established practice—in fact it was the first periodontal practice in the Scottsdale area when his partner opened it in 1972. As a lecturer and clinical researcher, he understands the value of staying engaged with the profession at a high level. He also understands the value of sharing that passion for excellence with colleagues, and that's a big reason he has started not one, but two, Spear Study Clubs.

THE SECRET TO GETTING STARTED...

Spear makes it so easy. It's a cookbook—they really give you everything you need in terms of materials and support to put it all together easily. The only part about getting started that takes any real effort on the part of the specialist is getting the right people. You have to find people who are serious about being a better dentist and are willing to make the commitment. But it is definitely worth the effort because you build a better relationship with your referring colleagues. And by building a better relationship you build more trust, and ultimately patients get better treatment.

WHAT MAKES THE STUDY CLUB MODULES GREAT...

The material is just so informative and useful. And the deeper we get into it, the more varied the cases are becoming. We're now exploring site-specific cases and full-mouth rehabs—some really interesting and challenging stuff—in an interdisciplinary way. All in all, I'd say it's a "10".

THE GPs SEE THE BENEFITS...

It's allowed all these doctors to enhance their treatment planning skills, and feel more comfortable with case presentations and with working within a referral network. Ultimately, it's about patient-focused treatment, and what they are learning in the study club has definitely gotten them excited in terms of what it can mean for their patients, and it has increased their confidence in what they are presenting. Not only that, they are learning how to best interact with other doctors to achieve the best result.

THE SPECIALIST SEES THE BENEFITS...

There is no question that the quality of referrals is better, for the simple reason

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that I have built stronger relationships. Instead of getting a piece of paper that just says “please evaluate,” I get an email that says “Here is the patient, here is what we want to achieve, here is our restorative plan—please evaluate for this purpose.” The study club has made them better restorative colleagues, better facilitators of treatment. What I like is that they don't seem as intimidated by working with specialists anymore. I don't really even think of them as referring GPs anymore—we're just all colleagues trying to do the best together for each patient.

THE SOCIAL FACTOR...

As a specialist, I get to speak to my referring doctors all the time and we become quite close. But in many cases a lot of GPs don't get the chance to talk with one another a lot and compare notes on things, so this is a great opportunity for them to get out of their isolated environments and communicate with each other. By bringing them together in a group like this, they all start to see what they have in common, and that they all have the same issues. It has created a whole network of relationships. So it's an opportunity for them to not only learn from the material we cover during the session, but also to share their other concerns and trade solutions.

HOW IT HAS “RAISED THE BAR”...

It's made many of the cases I do now more interesting and also, to be honest, more challenging. That's because the people in our club have a higher understanding and therefore a higher level of expectation for what we should be able to achieve together. Those of us in the group have raised the bar for what is possible in patient care, and I recognize that's something I have to live up to.

A BONUS TIP...

What I find to be incredibly useful is the Spear Digital Campus, where you can go online anytime and get help on just about any issue that comes up. I think it is a phenomenal educational tool. Often when we are dealing with a particular topic in the study club, I will go to the Digital Campus and pull up two or three minutes on that topic to illustrate things further. So I use the digital learning as an adjunct to each module. It's invaluable. In fact, if I were to give one bit of advice to someone who was just coming out of dental school I would say, “Get connected with Spear digital learning. Watch each lesson three times and you will be 99% better than most of the dentists out there.” That's how good it is.

“I love being a part of this study club. It has really expanded my knowledge and increased my ability to treatment-plan the more complex cases. It's helped me develop a more logical and systematic way to approach difficult cases that could otherwise feel overwhelming. As a result, I'm seeing an increase in the acceptance of larger cases.”

— DR. TIM LOVING, STUDY CLUB MEMBER

SPEAR

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