



Alumni profile: Dr. Brigitte White, D'07: *Using Social Media to Inform and Connect*

DID YOU KNOW that #kiwi is considered a #dental power food? High in calcium, it neutralizes acid in the mouth and boosts enamel defense. #brightwhitespc #dentist #dentistry #oralhealth #nutrition #funfact #tuesdaytrivia

That post is from the Instagram feed of Dr. Brigitte White (CGS'04, D'07), in which she provides a wide range of information on oral health, dental procedures, cosmetic options, and general wellness. Although not an internet native born into connectivity, cell phones, and social media, Dr. White has embraced the world of YouTube, Instagram, and hashtags to communicate more fully with her patients and followers.

In recent months, she has addressed dental fears (“Be sure to let your dental team know about your concerns so they can help get you on a positive path to better #oral-care”), teeth grinding (“A #dental nightguard can help prevent this pattern and relax your muscles overnight so you are even less likely to clench during the day”), and whitening (“There are 40 different #tooth shades and longer days mean more natural light to illuminate your brightest smile”), all posted with photographs and multiple hashtags.

When Dr. White graduated from Penn Dental Medicine, Twitter was in its infancy and Instagram was still three years from its launch. “I had millennial envy,” she says. “I had to teach myself a crash course in branding.” Although she had started blogging several years earlier, her experience has been particularly useful since she opened her practice, BrightWhites Family and Cosmetic Dentistry, in Alexandria Va., in 2017.

Dr. White has embraced social media to communicate more fully with her patients.

But while she believes social media is a positive tool to communicate with patients, as well as market her practice, she cautions that “it takes a lot of time to keep up.”

Meanwhile, despite her busy schedule running her practice and raising her son, Dr. White also has found time to self-publish a young adult novel and two children’s books, including “Making the Cut,” focused on oral health and featuring the characters Max, the BrightWhites, and Bacteria Billy, which is available on Amazon.

A native Philadelphian, Dr. White earned her B.A. in public policy and international affairs from Princeton University. After graduating from Penn Dental Medicine, she practiced for three years in Washington, D.C., where she met her husband, Aleksandar. At the same time, she was thinking about how to fulfill her dream of living in Europe. In September 2010, she and her husband decamped for the U.S. military base in Stuttgart, Germany, where for three years she practiced a wide range of general dentistry on military members, their families, and international military members such as NATO personnel.

When her family returned to Washington, D.C., she worked at Mary’s Center for Maternal and Child Care, a non-profit, until starting her practice.

While living in Stuttgart, her now six-year-old son Luka was born, prompting Dr. White to start what she called a “mommy” blog, writing mostly about raising a bilingual child. Over time, she saw a need for accurate information on oral care and started focusing more on dental health and general wellness. One of her most popular posts was a 2015 YouTube video on baby oral care that garnered 26,000 views.

“The mommy market is my biggest reach, but I want to meet all my patients where they are,” she says, noting her oldest patient is 94. She says aspiring dental students and other providers have reached out

to her for information on how social media platforms “can be used in such a great way for community outreach, professional development and support.”

She also views social media as an opportunity to address the wide range of oral care products on the market today, while helping to dispel misinformation.

“There is so much misinformation on the information highway,” she says. “I feel I have to engage in social media as a tool to educate and properly inform people.”