



UCF's new dentist, Joseph Chasko, and new hygienist, Wendy Hart,

A Reason to Smile: UCF's New Dentist and Hygienist to Begin Seeing Patients

UCF's new dentist, Joseph Chasko, hopes students, faculty and staff will make a new year's resolution to come see him soon.

He will begin seeing patients Dec. 14, when UCF Health Services opens its new high-tech dental center on campus and becomes the only Florida university with an on-site dental center that serves students, faculty and staff.

Florida Atlantic University has an on-campus dental clinic, but it accepts only students. Fewer than 15 university dental clinics exist nationwide.

Chasko comes to UCF after working in a large group practice for three years in Orlando and owning a dental practice in Fort Lauderdale for 12 years. He earned his Doctor of Dentistry from the University of Florida and completed his residency at Louisiana State University.

"The best part of UCF's new dental center is the integration of all of the latest technologies in one system," Chasko said. "Private practice clinics usually have some, but not all, of these technologies."

The technology includes a television monitor above each of the four dental chairs and an intra-oral camera that Chasko will use to "tour the mouth" as the patient watches on the monitor. Patients also can enjoy television programs or educational videos about their dental procedures during their exams.

Located on the second floor of the UCF Health Center, the dental center also features digital X-rays with ultra-low radiation, instruments that scientifically diagnose tooth decay and electronic health records.

Wendy Hart, UCF's new dental hygienist, will perform cleanings and other dental services. She worked two years at a private dental practice in Virginia and five years at a large practice in Florida. Hart has a bachelor's degree in Dental Hygiene from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Hart is excited to work in a university setting and teach young adults about the importance of oral health.

"I want students to know how important their smile is going to be in their career," she said. "Their smile is their most important asset."

"We see a lot of cavities in college students," said Chasko, explaining that students, separated from parents who oversaw their dental needs, often neglect their teeth, eat poorly and wait until a holiday break to visit their dentist back home. UCF's dental center means that dental needs can be addressed immediately.

Designed with the patient's comfort in mind, the center's four dental chairs face windows with a refreshing view of the outdoors. Needle-free local anesthesia can be used for cleanings and gum therapy for patients with sensitivity. The dental instruments are located behind the patient, out of view.

Paperless and chartless, the UCF dental center is "green." Motion sensors will regulate the lights; high-efficiency faucets and a special pump will conserve 250,000 gallons of water per year; and the use of digital imaging, instead of traditional film, will eliminate the disposal of X-ray film jackets, lead X-ray wraps and toxic chemicals.

Annelise Driscoll, dental center administrator, leads a full-time staff of five, including a dentist, a hygienist, a dental assistant, a receptionist and a financial counselor. Operational costs, including salaries, will be paid for by dental service revenues.

"We are grateful for the support from the Student Government Association and UCF administration to help bring this much-needed service to the UCF community," said Bob Wirag, director of UCF Health Services.

The UCF dental center offers preventive, restoration, urgent and cosmetic services, and it will accept "PPO" insurance plans. To make an appointment, call 407-823-1635.