

# Club Life: Dr Anita Madhav

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As a little girl growing up in an extended Indian family in the African nation of Zambia (formerly Rhodesia), Dr Anita Madhav learned the importance of sharing and caring from her father. The oldest of several siblings, her dad always looked after his family and friends and passed on the same values to his children. With so many aunts and uncles watching out for her, it's no surprise one of her father's brothers noticed how studious she and her sisters were and encouraged her dad to send them to college in the U.S. to give them more career choices and better opportunities.

In 1988, Dr Madhav left her home in Lusaka, Zambia to pursue her education in Oklahoma. She completed her undergraduate degree at South Western Oklahoma State University, and then enrolled at the Oklahoma University College of Dentistry. She also completed the highly selective Advanced Education in General Dentistry residency program, which gave her the opportunity to treat patients with diverse needs. Subsequently she and her husband moved to Plano, Texas, where she opened a private practice in 2000. Here Dr Madhav reflects on her more than 20 years in private practice and offers thoughts on the future of dentistry.



Dr Madhav working at her Plano, Texas, practice last year.

***Q Was it a huge culture shock for you to move from Africa to Oklahoma?***

Actually, no. Before Zambia got its independence it was a British colony, so our upbringing there was like growing up in England. Because our TV programs were re-runs from the U.S., I already had a fair amount of insight into U.S. culture before I came here. My sisters and I all used to watch the TV series *Dallas* as kids! Plus, I'm pretty outgoing so I had no problems making friends when I got to Oklahoma.

***Q When did you first think you might like to be a dentist?***

It wasn't until the second semester of college that I started thinking of what career I wanted to pursue. It was more about considering what I *didn't* want to do that led me to the path of dentistry. I knew I did not want to be in a hospital environment, and I do not do well in corporate settings because I don't do well with others telling me what to do. I did want to do something in healthcare because I enjoy taking care of people. At one point I considered optometry, but during an eye checkup—while the optometrist was asking 'Is this better, or that? This or that?'—I just thought, "Forget that! This would be such a boring profession!" I then went to a dental school for a tour and realized I could see myself doing this—and that is how I ended up in dentistry. After I applied during my sophomore year of undergraduate school, OU College of Dentistry actually accepted me to dental school without yet having an undergraduate degree.

***Q What is your favorite part about being a dentist?***

One of my favorite things is changing people's lives by changing their smiles. I've seen shy girls who used to cover their mouths while talking turn into confident young ladies who are smiling and laughing all the time. That is incredibly rewarding. And, I love my patients. They come to me because they want to and not because of some insurance plan. I have many long-term patients who have become like family. I am incredibly lucky in that regard.



Dr Anita Madhav (left) and her sister Dr Sheila Naik with the 2020 Symposium emcee Kevin Joyce.

***Q You're a twin, and your twin is a dentist too! Do you and she share "twin ESP?"***

We definitely have that kind of twin telepathy—just the other day I was out shopping to buy scrub caps for my office. I got a call from my twin sister about two hours later in which she tells me about some scrub caps she found on Amazon. I had never mentioned to her I was looking for them! Another time I walked into her house and saw the exact same artwork I have in my house. We buy the same items like dresses all the time individually without ever talking about it.