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SMILE INC
DENTAL SURGEONS

DOCTOR

From afar, it doesn't look much like a dental practice. In fact, its neighbours first thought it was a model agency. It doesn't help that SMILE inc.'s willowy director, with her clear skin, dazzling smile and endless legs, looks like she belongs on the catwalk.

"In fact, we didn't want the practice to resemble a typical clinic. We wanted to create a cosy ambiance which will help to ease any anxiety our patients may have, and make them feel comfortable and relaxed," says Grace Chong-Tan, the aforementioned director.

Only time will tell if this misconception will work for or against SMILE inc. But as far as this pain-phobic journalist is concerned, SMILE inc.'s patient-friendly atmosphere and modern amenities are some things she's been waiting far too long for.

Today, as I'm comfortably seated at the waiting lounge, I try to forget I'm a journo on assignment and put myself in the frame of mind of a potential patient. At the outset, I already like what I see and how I'm treated and warm up to the abundance of cherry wood panelled furniture and the pleasant receptionist who leaves me with enough magazines to keep me happily occupied for at least an hour — not that I have to wait that long for consultation to begin. Sipping a cold beverage, I am quickly distracted by what's showing on TV. There are no butterflies in my stomach, no sick feeling borne of nervousness nor the anticipation of pain. My hands are not the usual cold clammy things that surface during visits to the dentist.

I haven't finished skimming through one magazine and the doc-in-attendance shows me into his treatment room, which, looks more like the beauty cabin of a facialist with a penchant for hi-tech gadgetry, than a sterile consultation room. It's not intimidating at all.

Everything — from the personal computer, sideboards to the dentist's chair — is fashionably white. Shiny kidney dishes and glistening instruments, all vacuum-packed and 100 per cent sterilised, are lined neatly on an adjustable side table. I lie horizontal on the dentist's chair which I find more comfortable than any airplane seat. I look up at the ceiling and lo and behold, a television monitor screening the day's afternoon matinee.

"Do feel free to make a video selection," quips the good-natured dentist, "but first let me show you what your teeth look like." He fiddles with the keyboard attached to his PC and inserts a pencil-thin

probe into my mouth. This pointer-like apparatus is an Intra-Oral Camera that allows both dental surgeon and patient to simultaneously scrutinise the condition of the latter's teeth.

It sure feels like the doc and I are making a mini movie about my ivories. It's embarrassing but really useful and accurate. This is the way to diagnose dental disorders in the new millennium surely, as nothing seems to escape the Intra-Oral Camera.

"Uh oh, Susanah's got two cavities. Mmm ... but she cleans her teeth rather well, but oh look, she's got brown stains behind her lower front teeth ... hmm ... wonder how they got there," he reveals. To think I never knew those brown black stains ever existed.

"Shall I clean them?" doc asks. Yes, please. He removes the little oral handycam-esque wand and pokes a new nozzle into my mouth. "This is not going to hurt," he says and he doesn't lie. There is no pain, only the feeling of a gazillion or so icy minty jets shooting out of the device and onto my ivory wall of shame.

I decide I've done enough drooling in front of the good doctor and say "when". I spit into the trendy steel basin and wipe the frothy evidence from my mouth. Okay, at least I know I won't bolt out of this room screaming my head off when I finally get those cavities filled. That's a very nice thought.

Besides the two aesthetically designed treatment cabins, there's also a one-of-a-kind sterilisation room and giant X-ray machine to check out.

I peer into the narrow strip of a sterilisation room which has all the necessary equipment for guarding against the risk of cross-infection. "We practice full sterilisation through the use of pre-sterilised hand pieces and instruments and disposable items. All gloves, cups, masks, salivary ejector tips and napkins are disposable, and every instrument is ultra-sonically cleaned, sealed and autoclaved at no extra surcharge. All clinical surfaces are also disinfected after each patient is treated," Grace explains. This is good news in this age of AIDS. Besides, it is the right of every patient to be protected against infection when visiting the dentist.

The Intra-Oral Camera is not the only cool tool that can make spot-on diagnoses. In another spacious room I come face to face with the monstrous Orthopantomogram, an X-ray machine that is able to accommodate not only single tooth but full jaw X-rays. This is a useful piece of equipment to have considering the fact that 40 ▶

No pain no gain, so the adage goes. Not any more it seems. With the advent of SMILE inc., the newest concept in dental care, a visit to the tooth doctor can be as pleasurable as putting up your feet for a pedicure at the parlour. SUSANAH CHEOK succumbs to suction and drill to find out more.

SOOTHE



per cent of all dental disease states can only be detected through this mammoth machine, and not through the naked eye. This means that buried teeth, cysts, tumours, dead teeth and hidden decay can be detected and arrested in time.

I'm not the most technically inclined person and may not understand completely how each and every machine works, but once I become a patient at SMILE inc. I'm automatically put on its Patient Education programme which consists of on-screen images and explanations about the current condition of my teeth, the tools and procedures needed for treatment, how these work and the kind of improvements I could be seeing.

SMILE inc. also sets new standards by being the fully computerised dental practice that it is. From front office to dental treatment rooms, each patient's record and dental data are stored in a mainframe that makes for easy retrieval as well as quick and efficient diagnosis.

The concept of providing comprehensive dental treatment utilising state of the art technology under one roof is hard to resist. SMILE inc. is a one-stop specialist centre where routine dental treatments, select cosmetic dental procedures as well as services like Orthodontics, Periodontology, Pedodontics and oral surgery are available.

"But what we are particularly proud of is the fact that we're the first practice in Asia to offer laser tooth whitening. This technology has already brightened thousands of smiles around the world," Grace tells me excitedly. If what she claims is true — that it whitens one's teeth permanently in one visit, eliminating even the deepest stains that nothing else seems to be able to remove — girls like me should really give it a go.

The gadgetry and modern gimmicks sound tempting even to the technologically shy, but the burning 64 million dollar question I long to ask is whether all the modern advances that SMILE inc. has incorporated into its practice will eradicate the concept of pain once and for all.

"Well, we use the latest equipment and technology to virtually eliminate pain from dentistry. At worst we are working towards pain-free dentistry," is my assurance from the ruddy faced dentist, who is beaming like a Cheshire cat as he shows me out. ●

SMILE inc. is located at #02-124/126 Suntec City Mall, opposite Carrefour hypermart. Call 733 1802 for appointments. Opening hours are 9am to 6pm from Mondays to Saturdays. Any person needing emergency treatment will be seen on the same day during consultation hours. After-hours treatment can be arranged by appointment.

SMILE inc. is also located at #02-06/07, Forum The Shopping Mall, Orchard Road. Call 733 1622 for appointments.