

BALANCE HARMONY WELLBEING

# OASIS

Inaugural Issue 2007

## Bare Essentials

## How Sweet It Is

Honey is a sweet treat for wellness inside and out!

## TRAVELLING GREEN

Add a level of environmental responsibility to your vacation

# Heavens at Home

## Pueblo Pampering

At a resort and spa on an American Indian reservation

## SEA-ING STARS

World's Top Cruises

## THE BLESSINGS OF A SURFER VOYEUR

## TAKING YOGA OUTDOORS

Finding yin and yang in the city



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with this issue

**FACIAL OR BODY TREATMENT SESSION AT LIFESPA WORTH S\$188**

(see page 49 for details)



PHOTOGRAPHY BY ADRIAN LOH

## say 'cheese'!

Dr Ernest Rex Tan discloses the secrets behind a beautiful smile.

by Ashley Chong

A million-dollar smile just makes you want to smile right back. You've seen them flashed by celebrities as they sashay down red carpets and are caught on camera. I recall seeing a lucky participant gifted with one on an episode of *Extreme Makeover*. These smiles radiate beauty; they broadcast confidence.

Alas, Hollywood is 14,127 kilometers from Singapore; it might as well be light-years.

I peer deeply into a mirror. Yes, I brush. Yes, I floss, but what's a poor mortal like me to really hope for? Just the prospect of keeping my teeth, if I'm lucky? My smile fades — until I hear about Smile Inc..

Walking into Smile Inc., I felt at home. A walkway and luxuriously-appointed reception are bathed in the golden and coppery hues of sunrise and look warm and welcoming, like some chic restaurant where the prospect of a fine dining experience beckons.

However, the visitors sharing this ambience with me were

neither dinner guests nor party-goers, but patients awaiting consultations. "We have nicely decorated interiors, a TV moulded in the ceiling (of our consultation rooms), we dim the lights and even play music..." elaborates Dr Ernest Rex Tan, Director of Smile Inc. Dental Surgeons.

"We believe in creating an environment where patients are able to relax so that it prevents them from thinking too much about the pain from the procedure. This (fear) is usually psychological."

Although Smile Inc. advocates the belief that going to a dentist need not be traumatic, Rex assures that, contrary to the recent trend of 'dental spas', the comforting interior design and residential elements at Smile Inc. serve simply as useful distractions for the patients.

"We don't believe in those dental spas; if patients want to find a place to indulge and unwind, they can just head off for a massage or a spa treatment. In here, I still want to do proper dentistry," he explains.

Spearheading the popular dental clinic with his wife and

Rex and his wife Grace, both believe in taking time off once in a while to indulge in their 'oasis' —travelling



partner, Mrs Grace Chong-Tan, Rex hopes that the concept of his clinic and the philosophy behind his practice will help eliminate the fear of dentists instilled in many people.

"I love to interact with people, with my patients," says Rex. "It is inspiring to watch how their personalities change after the procedure. A lot of them soon become very outgoing; their self esteem increases, encouraging them to move forward with their lives and go on to build stronger relations."

Rex adds that the other reason which motivated him to venture into the field of dentistry is the nature of dental practice. "I love the technical aspects of it. I love to execute the procedures simply because I love to use my hands. It is a demonstration of science in its most artistic expression!" he tells me.

Prior to setting up Smile Inc., both Rex and Grace engaged in years of study and research on dentistry in search of unique solutions for those who require dental services. Their turning point came in 1996 when the couple chanced upon a radical application: laser whitening. A state-of-the-art technology then, this laser system offers the ability to create an almost instantaneous whitening effect on teeth. This was a vast improvement over the inconvenience of having to wear a tray containing whitening solvents which was the usual practice then.

"It was indeed revolutionary! At that time no one else was able to offer such (dental whitening) services," remarks Rex. "Other

than our official inauguration, that year (1997) also marked Smile Inc. materialising its many firsts."

With the desire to popularise teeth whitening and debunk scepticism in dental technology, the couple proceeded to import Asia's first laser whitening system. Rex and Grace even took a step further and acquired the machine's distribution rights for the region.

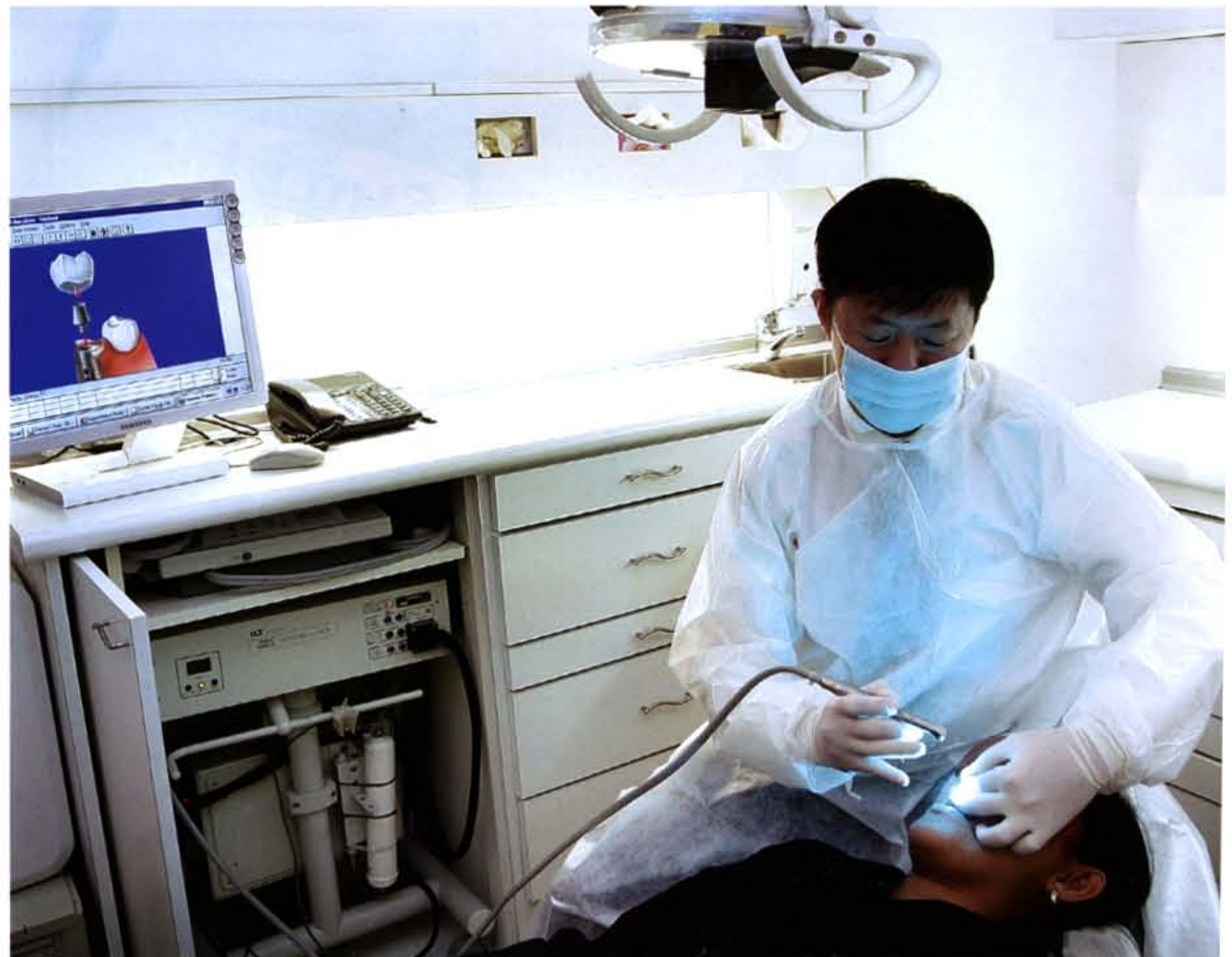
Today, Smile Inc. is recognised as a leader in cosmetic and lifestyle dentistry across the globe. Offering state-of-the-art technologies in its dental treatments and sterilization methods, one main service particularly strikes a chord: its signature 'Smile Inc. Makeover'.

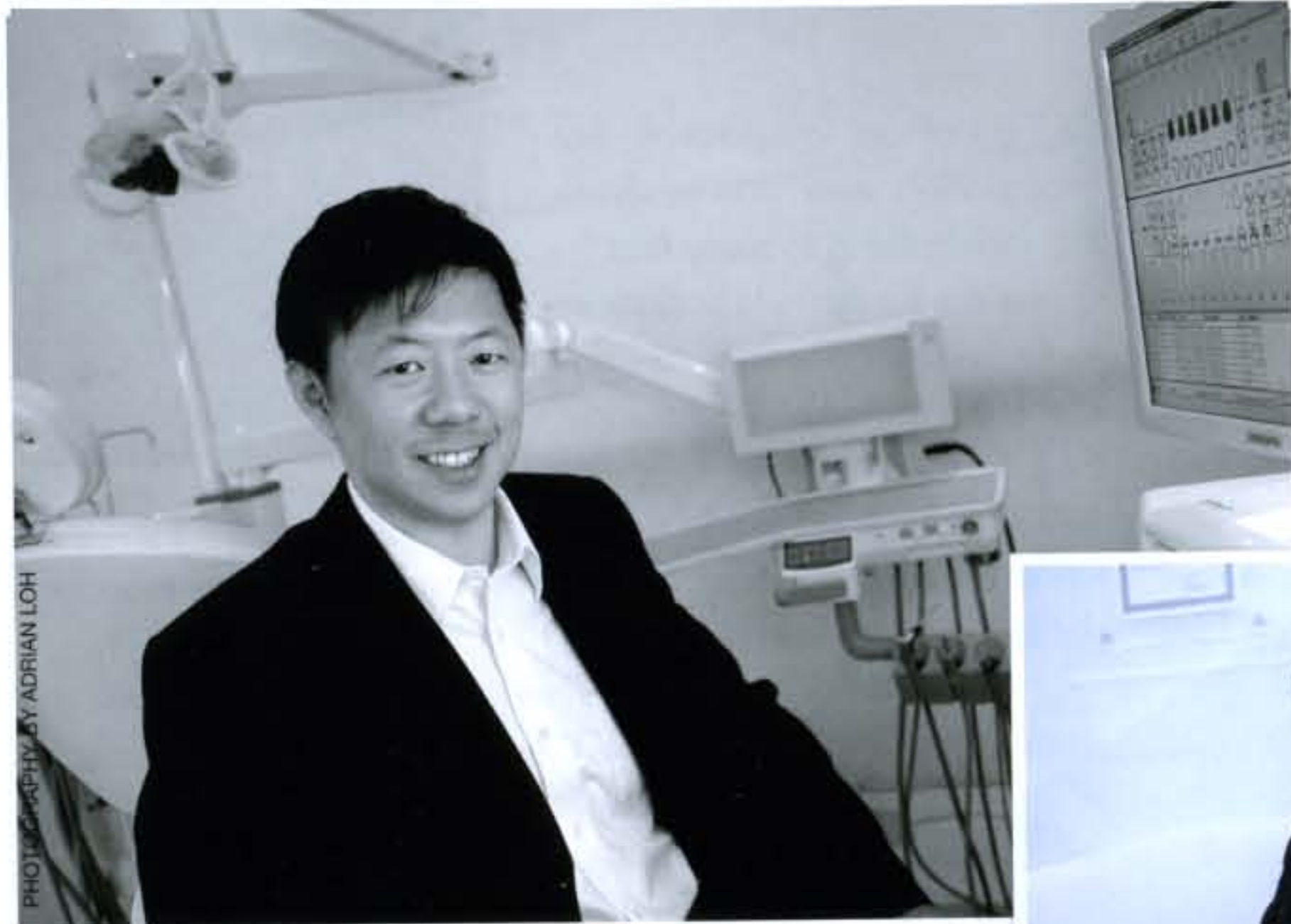
Put it this way: after The Smile Inc. Makeover, you could say "Bye-Bye Ugly Betty and Hello Gorgeous." With its ability to transform crooked, yellow and misshapen teeth into pure brilliance, this comprehensive, non-surgical makeover is able to dramatically enhance a patient's appearance in a single session.

"The Smile Inc. Makeover is all about returning years of youth to my patients. It is non-invasive yet long-lasting, without any need for injections, without pain, without blood," Rex aptly summarises.

America may have been the country that pioneered and popularised this age-defying, youth-enhancing beauty regime, but

"We believe in creating an environment where patients are able to relax so that it prevents them from thinking too much about the pain from the procedure. This (fear) is usually psychological." says Dr Tan





"When it comes to improving your smile and enhancing your appearance, there is never a question of being 'too young' or 'too old'."



the notion of cosmetic dentistry has since evolved internationally into a multi-disciplinary component of total facial harmony — the optimal smile being part of a so-called 'complete' look. Today, the whole world subscribes to this concept of beauty and the statistics on people opting for this regime have seen a phenomenal rise.

"People want to look better, look younger, faster. Those who did not visit dentists previously now come here (Smile Inc.) to seek advice," Rex points out. Moreover, a winning smile is desired by far more than those in film, television and entertainment. He relates that his patients come from industries like banking, finance and I.T. — and all the way from Germany, the U.K. and the U.S. to seek his dental expertise.

"I once had this patient who came into the clinic wearing those typical big glasses and big 'mousey' hair... she had protruding teeth and an intruded jaw," Rex recalls. "What we did for her was to correct these flaws, help improve her smile and restore all the lost facial time: she looked a lot younger. During the review stage, she walked into the clinic with her hair done up, make-up on... and we were all stunned. She's beautiful. It was truly a transformation!"

"When it comes to improving your smile and enhancing your appearance," Rex says, "there is never a question of being 'too young' or 'too old' (to do it)."

Despite the nature of his profession, it certainly wasn't solely her warm smile that attracted him to his wife, Grace. Married in 1996, this husband and wife team have seen not only a decade's achievement in their business enterprise, but a blissful marriage that has produced a son, now six-years-old.

Contrary to the common perception that couples should not

work together as it leads to conflicts and disagreements, Rex feels that theirs is a winning combination. "We both understand each other, our strengths and our capabilities. Grace's personality is very strong; she has ideas for certain subjects and insights in certain areas that are great!" Rex shares.

He maintains that his passion remains in practical clinical work and he will continue to put his hands to use as a tool to help patients develop better smiles and, hence, develop the confidence to lead better lives.

Rex and Grace both agree that the interests of patients should always be top in their list of priorities. Although disappointment cannot be completely avoided when either party has to cancel out on dates or family outings due to work commitments, they have the common understanding that work takes precedence.

"Working together is actually a spontaneous building of our relationship. Our priorities are aligned. We also build trust since we know exactly what each of us is doing at work instead of playing a guessing game. I guess this work relationship is also feasible since both of us are mature enough to sit down and evaluate our strengths and ensure that egos don't clash."

The couple both believe in taking time off once in a while to indulge in their 'oasis' — travelling.

Ten years and still going strong... both his happily married life and the success of his company have certainly taught Rex how to keep on smiling. "Everything makes me smile!" he beams. "You've got to look at the humorous side of life to enjoy it... because life is just so exciting!" 🍀

