



High standards of sterilisation helped Smile Inc see an increase in patient numbers even during the Sars outbreak in 2003, says Mrs Chong-Tan (front row, extreme right).

PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

# Happy, smiley

Smile Inc Dental Surgeons provides high quality dental care services with the latest techniques

by douglas chew

ONE of the first local dental chains to place an emphasis on branding, Smile Inc Dental Surgeons once again clinched the Singapore Prestige Brand Award (SPBA) in the Established Brands category. The 17-year-old chain provides high quality dental care and services, utilising the latest techniques and state-of-the-art technology and facilities.

"The success of Smile Inc and its quality service and lifestyle focus has changed many people's perceptions of the dental industry, from one associated with pain and fear of visiting the dentist to one associated with enhancing one's self esteem and confidence through an improved smile," says Mrs Grace Chong-Tan, the company's co-founder and managing director.

Smile Inc began its operations at Suntec City Mall in 1997, and the business model and philosophy of providing value-added dental care was so well-received by its clients that the company decided to open a second branch within the same year at Forum The Shopping Mall.

It now has branches at One Raffles Quay, Mandarin Gallery and its latest is at The Sail at Marina Bay. The company will open two more branches by the end of this year.

"Keeping to our core competencies and focusing on providing our patients with good quality dentistry, ensuring its sustainability and the non-dilution of the quality of our services, synergy in partnerships and collaborations, and most importantly, in preserving the premium standing of the Smile Inc brand, will be key in our expansion plans," adds Mrs Chong-Tan.

## Pioneer in laser teeth whitening

Scoring a series of firsts in its business journey, Smile Inc pioneered laser teeth whitening in Singapore in 1997 and remains the only practice here to employ the technique, which it regards as the gold standard in teeth whitening.

It was also the earliest dental practice to fully computerise its operations from its front office to its backroom, and among the first few to use hospital standard equipment in its sterilisation methods.

Mrs Chong-Tan relates how during the Sars episode in 2003, instead of facing dwindling numbers of patients, the dental chain saw a sharp spike in patient numbers. They came because they felt they could trust the high standards of sterilisation at Smile Inc.

A significant step in its branding journey was when Smile Inc became the first dental practice to register its brand name as a trademark in 1998.

Since then, it has also trademarked The Smile Inc Makeover, a series of dental procedures and techniques designed to correct discoloured, crooked and misaligned teeth.

"The Smile Inc brand has been punching above its weight in terms of our brand recognition and positioning, both in the eyes of the public and in the profession," says Mrs Chong-Tan.

Today, the company receives patients from all walks of life and counts among its loyal clientele overseas patients, who fly into the country specifically for dental treatment.

"Smile Inc believes that the high standards that have been set for the group and our continuous pursuit for progress have earned us trust and reputation from our patients, both in Singapore and the region," she says.

Pleased to receive the SPBA award for the fourth year running, Mrs Chong-Tan says: "This award is a recognition by Singapore of Smile Inc Dental Surgeons as a home-grown brand that has not only attained a preferred brand status, but has continued to maintain this standing over the years.

"It is an endorsement and an affirmation of Smile Inc's corporate vision, philosophies and achievements, and will inspire us to continue in our quest to deliver exceptional quality and value in our services."

The success of Smile Inc and its quality service and lifestyle focus has changed many people's perception of the dental industry, from one associated with pain and fear of visiting the dentist to one associated with enhancing one's self esteem and confidence through an improved smile.

— Mrs Grace Chong-Tan, co-founder and managing director, Smile Inc Dental Surgeons