

## Good for the patient, good for the environment

Dr. Steve Koos opens the nation's first and only green oral surgery practice here in Chicago

BY BRETT MARLOW

Dentistry has found a new patient—the environment.

Meet Dr. Steve Koos, D.D.S., M.D., and mastermind behind Ora, Oral Surgery and Implant Studio, the nation's first and only green oral surgery practice, located right here in Chicago. Koos practices in a completely eco-friendly building and environment.

He says he's taking a tenant from the Hippocratic Oath, "do no harm," a step further. He believes that what's good for the patient should also be good for the environment.

"As a healthcare provider, I think that we have a collective responsibility not to harm the environment. We need to realize in general that human health and environmental health are inextricably linked," Koos said.

Everything from the floors, to the ceiling tiles, from the toothbrushes to the metal reusable suction tips, to reusable cloth sterilization pouches—everything, literally, at Ora was chosen, and is used with the environment in mind. The practice, which opened late last year in the South Loop, is LEED certified and follows both the guidelines of the United States Green Building Council and of Green Guide for Health Care.

Koos, who is in his early 40s, says he's been conscious of the environment throughout his life, rethinking the use of different materials, and recycling, but didn't think to bring it into his own work, until it suddenly dawned on him.

"It was actually appalling to me when I started to break down how much waste that I experienced and generated in a hospital and private practice setting," said Koos. "It really took a complete slant in trying to look at things in a new direction and trying to implement things initially."

Koos said he read for months and months on environmental topics to get his idea going. But, hearing him speak, you would think he's been an environmentalist all his life, naming toxins and chemicals left and right, noting their harmful faults and listing alternatives that don't harm the environment.

His practice is free of persistent bio-accumulative toxins (PBTs), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and instead, uses things such as Konecto flooring, a linoleum-like product that requires no harmful adhesives.

He used his newfound knowledge and guidelines from the Green Guide for Health Care to get detailed down-to-the-point information on where he could find tools to create an office that is PVC-free, such as syringes, IV tubing and bags. Even the aprons used for his state-of-the-art, less-radiating, x-ray machine contain no lead.

According to Koos, he learns something new every day about the environment and how to integrate that consciousness into his care. In the near future, he plans to start up a prescription take back program not only for his patients, but for the community. Prescribed medication ends up getting flushed down the toilet where it gets into the water supply—locally, Lake Michigan's water has tested positive for small amounts of pharmaceuticals.

He hopes to be a resource where his patients and others can come and drop off their old prescription bottles and unused medications to be properly disposed of.

*"It was actually appalling to me when I started to break down how much waste that I experienced and generated..."*

—Dr. Steve Koos

Not only concerned for his patients, Koos says his practice's environment offers a healthier place for his employees to work without exposure to harmful chemicals and toxins. He carools to work and takes public transportation in the summer, and even has an area for patients and employees to store their bikes, along with a locker room changing area.

Koos recently completed a leadership course in green health care and is on his way to becoming a LEED accredited professional for commercial interiors. His practice participated in the Green Festival and the CleanMed conferences in May.

He hopes that other healthcare facilities investigate the benefits not only of having a green office and environment, but also offer green healthcare. He firmly believes that health is two-fold: people's health, and the health of the environment. While the costs of doing so may increase in the beginning, the benefits will pay off financially and environmentally.

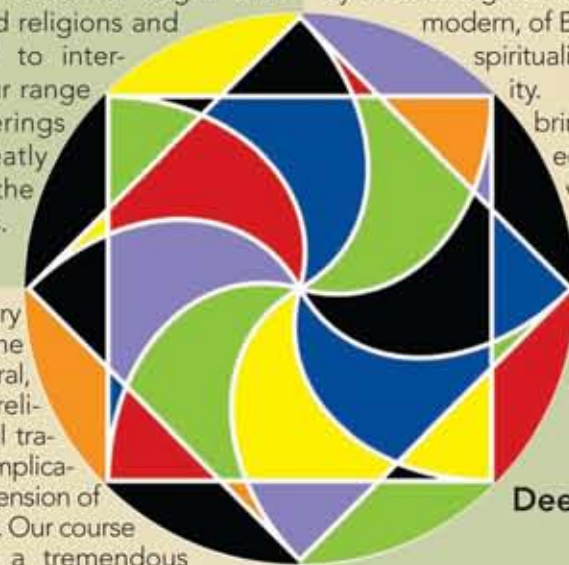
"We're not just a dental office and an oral surgery office providing state-of-the-art treatment," he says. "We want the message to come across that this is a care and healing facility—both in how things occur here and the thought behind it." 🌱

*Brett Marlow is a recent journalism graduate from Columbia College Chicago who enjoys classic rock, a nice cold one and sitting on stoops while not writing, of course.*

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