

STRENGTH & PERSEVERANCE IN COMMUNITY

It's impossible to know when life will throw you a curve ball. But it is possible to prepare for some of life's uncertainties by planning and building a community of support. No one knows this better than Eric Prouty, DMD, owner of Water Garden Dental in Costa Mesa, California. When an unexpected medical condition presented itself, Prouty was able to keep his practice running successfully during his six-week absence. His secret? A strong network of dental professionals, dedicated to each other's success.

BUILDING A COMMUNITY

In southern California, there's a big community of CEREC dentists who regularly come together to share case studies, tips and expertise with each other. At least once a quarter, Mehdi Azarshahi, Digital Impression and CAD/CAM Specialist, hosts a CEREC Study Club event, and he's been doing this for the past ten years.

"When I first came to the United States from Iran, a woman on the plane gave my wife and I some of the most valuable advice we've ever gotten," said Azarshahi. "She told us to stay focused and get involved in the community." Azarshahi took that advice to heart and founded the SoCal CEREC Study Club shortly after settling in the Los Angeles area.

"There are so many

passionate doctors out there who are excited about technology, so I decided to bring them all together with the study club," said Azarshahi. Prouty was among some of the first CEREC enthusiasts to join. "It's grown so much over the years – it's incredible. And I've met some amazing doctors because of it," said Prouty.

Amazing is no understatement, either. Three years ago, three doctors from the study club and eight others from the Costa Mesa area decided to create an emergency panel of dentists. Their pact was simple. "If any of us fell ill or passed away unexpectedly, the others would step in to keep the practice operating until the other could return or sell it," said Prouty. And they all agreed to do this on a voluntary basis.

PREPARATION LEADS TO THE BEST LUCK

Prouty continued with business as usual, hoping he'd never need to call on the emergency panel. Then in early 2017, he was diagnosed with Ampullary cancer and would need to be out of his practice for at least eight weeks.



"I went to the doctor with some pain, and an MRI quickly uncovered my cancer," said Prouty. "I ended up needing a Whipple procedure, which is a major, invasive surgery, but fortunately my cancer was small." Prouty didn't need to have the surgery immediately, so he scheduled it a few weeks out so he and his wife could prepare for his absence.

"I contacted the emergency panel, and everyone was really supportive. We worked out a schedule so that the 11 doctors would take turns volunteering to cover appointments," said Prouty. His wife and office manager, Laura Prouty, helped coordinate the schedules, ensuring patients would continue to receive care.

"Being able to trust in the support network I had in my practice while I was out helped me recover quickly."

"It was a relief being able to step away from the practice and know it was in good hands. Helping to organize the panel was one of the best decisions I ever made," said Prouty. It also helped that Prouty had taken the time to thoroughly train his dental hygienists and wife to use the entire CEREC system. Three of the doctors were CEREC doctors, so needed very little assistance with the system. The other eight were familiar with CEREC, but frequently leveraged the expertise of Prouty's team.

"CEREC is so intuitive and precise that it helped keep my practice running smoothly. But my team – they're incredible. My team handled the system in the back, actually



scanning, milling, staining and glazing crowns so that the volunteer doctors could work," said Prouty.

Whenever he received updates about the practice, Prouty was pleased to hear the positive news. "Being able to trust in the support network I had in my practice while I was out helped me recover quickly" said Prouty. In fact, Prouty returned to work one week ahead of schedule.

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY AND HEALTH

The SoCal CEREC Study Club celebrated its 10-year anniversary in May 2017. Azarshahi, feeling inspired by Prouty's story and thankful for helping establish this community, invited Prouty to share his experience with other study club members, and show off some of his non-dental related talents.

"My friend and I have a band and Mehdi invited us to perform for the study club celebration," said Prouty. He also gave the introduction speech, marking the first time he talked about his experience in

front of a large group. "I think it's important to share this experience with other dentists. My biggest piece of advice to other doctors is to have an emergency plan and make sure your team is thoroughly trained on technology."

"The members were so excited to hear Dr. Prouty's story. I think many of them learned an important lesson about the value of being part of such a passionate community, and I hope to see more support systems like the emergency panel among other members," said Azarshahi.