

BEST OF JEWISH NEWS

HEALTH CARE

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JEWISH NEWS

Caring for generations



Dr. Michael B. Lebowitz

PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL LEBOWITZ

“We look at the whole person and their overall habits and lifestyle — not just a tooth.”

SHANNON LEVITT | MANAGING EDITOR

Dr. Michael B. Lebowitz liked the idea of mixing medicine, art mechanics and engineering when he decided to become a dentist. But the biggest allure was “the luxury of dealing with people,” he said. “If you don’t like people, usually you become a surgeon, but if you want to relate with people, this is perfect.”

The long-term relationships Lebowitz has formed have been built over generations. His Phoenix practice originally opened in 1917, and he is the third doctor to own it in 104 years. “It’s not just worrying about today. I can look back at patients who have been here 50 or 60 years,” he said. “I can look at my predecessor and see what he did for 40 years.”

The real thing that sets him apart from other dentists, is that he feels a responsibility to be there for his patients and to help them manage care through their lifetime — not just for the moment.

How do you approach patient care?

My practice has a tremendous history, and we treat patients as generational. We make recommendations because we know how people respond and we know what happens over a lifetime. Sometimes it’s just helping people get by and you do what you have to to keep them going.

A couple of the families we see are four generations.

What’s your favorite thing about what you do?

My favorite part is that my patients are family after 30 years of doing this. It’s like watching your family grow up.

What do you wish everyone knew about your job?

It’s not all about us, it’s all about the patients. I’m lucky to have the luxury of that.

What do you think would surprise people most about your job?

We look at the whole person and their

overall habits and lifestyle — not just a tooth. We’re involved in all levels and we make referrals. We have the full conversation.

What were some of the biggest challenges you faced during this past year amid the pandemic?

The biggest challenge is after COVID hit, as a doctor and business owner, everyone is looking to us for answers and safety and you’re having to sift through all the information and put people at ease and keep them in a safe environment. Information would change day to day and they expect us to have the answers. Every day you’re filtering through the information to find safety protocols and other things.

I have to say we did a very good job. We implemented fogging, decontaminating and HEPA filters and we looked at air flow and advanced sucking procedures. We made changes and bought new equipment.

We never heard of fogging before, but it was something good because the virus travels through the air and this decontaminates the room within two minutes.

What are some of the ways you foresee your profession changing because of the pandemic?

In certain respects, a lot of this is not new. We dealt with this with AIDS. When I started we didn’t have to wear gloves. My second year in school, they were mandatory. There are certain things we’ve implemented that probably aren’t going away like HEPA filters to reduce viral load in a space. We didn’t really worry about that before.

Disinfectant foggers and taking temperatures may not be maintained, but it won’t go away quickly. Most of the protocols we’ve used are still critical. We always treat every patient as if they have every disease. We assume everyone has something. This virus is

very transmissible through the air, which is very different than the others.

Was there anything good that came out of the pandemic?

That's a tough one. Not a whole lot I would say.

Personally, I controlled my schedule better and slowed down a bit. It made us control our day and patient flow better. It made us more aware of managing patients coming and going out of the office so it did help us take a look at when we were trying to do too much too fast. Patients became more accepting of time management.

In what ways do you bring your Judaism to work?

You give, not for recognition, but anonymously. You do it because that's what you do, and that's a basic premise of Judaism that I've always taken to heart. **JN**

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