

'Showing Up':

How One Orthodontist Keeps Her Study Club Thriving After 14 Years



Dr. Diane Shieh

Orthodontist,
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When orthodontist Dr. Diane Shieh decided to start a Spear Study Club 14 years ago, she wasn't just looking for another professional commitment. She was looking for a way to stay energized and remain curious.

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I've always believed that private practice only gives you part of what you need to know," she says. "You can't be a good practitioner unless you're constantly a student. The best way to do that is to be around people who can push you, lift you, and inspire you."

That drive led her to co-found the Southern New Hampshire Spear Study Club with her colleague, Dr. Joe Torio, an oral surgeon. Today, the club comprises 25 members — specialists and general practitioners alike — who meet monthly in Nashua, N.H. to collaborate, learn, and challenge each other.



Building a study club that lasts

Longevity doesn't happen by accident. Over 14 years, Dr. Shieh has learned that running a thriving study club requires consistency, creativity, and an intentional focus on engagement.

"We start planning the year in August," she says. "When possible, our curriculum for the year is designed around a theme. We post our full schedule, including modules, from September to June, and members are contacted personally to align a case or topic for co-presentation. Having members learn from each other is as valuable, if not more, than just attending the module and CE. We are developing and identifying resident experts at each meeting. It's rewarding as a leader knowing that your club members are resources for each other and feel comfortable sharing their expertise and talent."



Each meeting includes dinner, discussion, and a combination of Spear modules, member cases, and guest speakers.

But what really makes the club special, she says, is the atmosphere. "Creating the environment to learn starts with our ability to be vulnerable as leaders as well. We don't hesitate to ask questions and also highlight aspects of our cases we can improve on as well."

The power of learning together

When her club travels to workshops at Spear Campus in Scottsdale, Arizona, the collaboration deepens even further. "That's where the magic happens," she says. "When you learn together, you unify your vision and language. You start seeing things the same way, and that makes communication and treatment planning seamless. That's when you become a real team."

Those relationships extend far beyond the meeting room. "Now we text each other about cases all the time. There's an ease to treatment planning cases now where I can ask my colleague, 'Do you want me to line this up to the gingival margins or the incisal edges?' or they forward their treatment planning presentation to me prior to an exam, and we're already on the same page. That's the level of comfort and trust we've built."

A framework for excellence

Dr. Shieh has completed much of the Spear Core Curriculum herself and encourages her members to do the same. "We've been given this incredible framework, but you have to show up, push, and engage," she says. "There's no autopilot in leadership."

Her message is simple but powerful: "Make the experience worth it for your members. They're giving up family time to be there. You owe it to them to make it engaging, relevant, and fun."

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Fourteen years in, she's still just as energized — and still learning. "Leading a Spear Study Club keeps my passion for dentistry alive. Every meeting is a reminder of why I love what I do and why I never want to stop learning."

