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Introducing
Dr. Maneesh Jain
ODA President 2024-2025



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Dr. Maneesh Jain

President, Ontario Dental Association (2024-2025)

We had the opportunity to talk to Dr. Jain about the ODA, how he met his wife, what he does for fun and three things his grandfather taught him.

Heather White

“**W**e do nothing alone,” says Dr. Maneesh Jain, 151st President of the ODA. “We have seen great strength in working as a collective, representing the interests of our members and profession with strength and integrity.” And Dr. Jain wants even more of this, with the ODA continuing to build partnerships, educating and speaking with one voice, because being recognized as an essential component of the overall health care team is critical. “We look forward to continuing great collaboration and turning our challenges into opportunities,” he adds.



Photo: Michael Hope

OD: Please tell us about your childhood

MJ: As a kid, I was a bit of a nerd. I loved school. My favourite gift was the *World Book Encyclopedia*. I was born in Sarnia, Ont., and moved with my family to East Toronto as a toddler. Dad immigrated to Canada from India, in the early 1970s, and Mom came shortly after him. I had a very loving childhood and received a lot of attention from my



Dr. Jain looking sharp even as a young child with his parents.

parents. I also had the fortune of living with our paternal grandparents too. They came over to help when my brother was born; I was six years old.

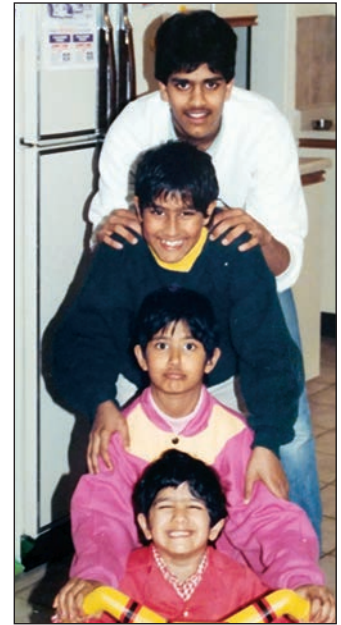
Eventually two more siblings came along. We were all very close, I used to deliver newspapers when I was a kid,



Dr. Jain (second from left) with his beloved grandfather (centre) and grandmother (right).

so I knew many of our neighbours. They used to call us the “basketball family” since we would all play on our driveway after dinner.

My parents always encouraged academic excellence. Beyond academics, my parents and grandparents instilled the value of hard work and serving your community. My grandfather had been a member of the Rotary and Lions clubs in India. He was a real role model to me and always exemplified the Rotary motto, Service Above Self.



Dr. Jain (top) is the eldest of four siblings.

OD: Please introduce us to your family

MJ: I have a loving family. My wife, Shikha, was my high school sweetheart. She was good friends with my cousin in London, Ont., who introduced us during a game of Monopoly. Shikha is the rock of our family, she’s a beautiful person (inside and out). Our relationship is rooted in deep friendship.



Left to right: Dr. Jain with Shikha, his wife; Akash, his son; and Ashna, his daughter, when the kids were young.

Shikha is an engineer by profession. She left her career when our son, Akash, was born because she wanted to spend time raising our children. Our daughter, Ashna, was born three years later. As our children can attest, Shikha is an amazing mother. She paused her career to focus on nurturing our children into the beautiful people they are today. Shikha is currently the CEO of GET Corp., a green energy company and was recently appointed as the commissioner of the Canadian Dairy Commission.



One thing Dr. Jain loves? Hiking! Whether it is hiking in the States to Angels Landing in Zion National Park, hiking in the Andes (below left), or hiking to Rainbow Mountain in Peru (below right), he is in.





Akash and Ashna are both studying at the University of Toronto. Akash is concurrently pursuing a law degree and a Master's in public policy. Ashna is finishing up her industrial engineering degree.

We are a tight-knit family and are constantly learning from one another. Although we are all busy, we never fail to find moments to disconnect from work and school, and spend time with one another. Our love of travel provides us the perfect opportunity to do this.

OD: What inspired you to go into dentistry?

MJ: I always knew I wanted to pursue a profession where I could help people. I had an affinity towards the sciences and pursued an undergraduate degree in neuroscience. My draw to dentistry stemmed from my conversations with my dentist and orthodontist, both of whom highlighted the unique opportunities dentistry provided. I was excited to work with my hands, diagnose, devise a treatment plan and perform a variety of procedures all while being able to build long-term relationships with patients. I graduated from dentistry at the University of Toronto in 1999.



Dr. Jain (front row) and his amazing dental practice team. "We are a general family practice with a focus on preventative, patient-oriented care," he says with a smile.

OD: What can you tell us about your practice?

MJ: After graduating, I started out as an associate in Guelph. I was fortunate to find an amazing mentor, Dr. Tom Cox. We had a partnership for a few years and, when he retired, I took on his practice. After that, our office expanded through the acquisition of three additional clinics from other retiring, well-established dentists in the area. I ultimately merged all the offices into one – with the help of Shikha, who partnered with me to build the practice into what it is today.

We are a general family practice with a focus on preventative, patient-oriented care. We have a team of 22 passionate and hardworking professionals. I respect and admire each and every one of them. They're like my second family. It feels surreal to think that, this year, I am celebrating 25 years of practice. I cannot believe how quickly time flies!



Shikha and Dr. Jain are proud of the panel art produced by their dental team on Team Day and displayed in the office, an idea inspired by the ODA.

OD: Can you tell us about your volunteerism? What drives you to go above and beyond what you need to do on a daily basis?

MJ: The importance of helping others, especially those who are less fortunate, has been ingrained in me from a young age. As a high school and university student, I volunteered at SickKids and Centenary Hospital, ran conferences for the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and coached basketball at a local primary school. When I started working as an associate in Guelph, I looked for ways to get involved, both in serving my community and advocating for the dental profession. As a proud Guelphite, I volunteered with the Rotary Club of Guelph Trillium, serving as president in 2022-2023. I was humbled to be named a Paul Harris Fellow in recognition of my 20+ years of contribution to the club. I also served on the board of the Guelph Community Foundation.

My involvement in dental advocacy started at the local level, where I held all executive roles at the Waterloo Wellington Dental Society. My desire to make a more systemic



The importance of helping others is paramount to Dr. Jain – he is built this way. Last year, for instance, he volunteered at Bearskin Lake First Nations Reserve through the ODA's Remote Areas Program.



Photo: Michael Hope

impact on the profession led me to the ODA. I served as an ODA Councillor for six years, engaged in ODA committees and volunteered as a political and media contact dentist. 2024 marks my ninth year on the ODA Board, where I have had the opportunity to take on more leadership roles.

Outside the ODA, I have participated in dental mission trips in Central and South America with a non-profit organization called Kindness in Action, based in Alberta. Additionally, last year, I volunteered in an Indigenous community through the ODA's Remote Areas Program. These experiences have highlighted the lack of oral health support available to these communities. There is so much more that we need to be doing. I hope to return to these mission trips and get involved in the Indigenous Oral Health Committee after finishing my tenure as president.

OD: What personal characteristics will help you succeed as ODA President?

MJ: I try to live my life with integrity and courage. I have an unwavering commitment to our vision and work hard to sincerely best serve the interests of our members and, by extension, their patients. I believe that when needed, challenging the status quo is imperative to progress and I am not afraid to stand up for what I believe in. Building relationships and engaging others is foundational to the way I work. When I was younger, my grandfather encouraged me to always consider an ancient Sanskrit word *Anekāntavāda*, which means “multiplicity of viewpoints.” The ultimate truth is many times complex, so always respect others, listen before talking, and think outside the box.

OD: What have you learned in your year as President-Elect?

MJ: In the past few years, the ODA has been doing a great job of succession planning; the Vice-President and President-Elect are empowered to get directly involved in the issues of the day. This approach was spearheaded by Dr. Bentley [ODA President 2022-2023] and has strengthened our collaborative leadership. This past year, the Canadian Dental Care Plan (CDCP) was our main focus, and I appreciated the importance of unity. One of the best things that happened with the CDCP was that it brought the entire country together. The provincial and territorial dental associations worked together, coast to coast to coast, to advocate for what is best for patients and members. That collegiality was fostered by Dr. Nicolucci [ODA President 2023-2024] who has done a great job helping build that unity. I am fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from these great leaders.

OD: What's on your agenda for the coming year?

MJ: I would like us to be the masters of our destiny; to protect and promote our great profession. We are facing numerous challenges right now, from staff shortages to feasible implementation of the infection prevention and control (IPAC) guidelines, the parameters of the CDCP, regulatory pressures from our colleges, and soaring overhead costs. Glass half empty or glass half full? Let's take these challenges and turn them into opportunities. Let's focus on forming strategic partnerships with a variety of organizations, bringing dentistry to the forefront of being a valued partner in the overall health care team.



It was a wild ride for the 2023-2024 Office of the Chair members: Frank Bevilacqua, ODA's CEO; Dr. Brock Nicolucci, President; Dr. Lisa Bentley, Past President; Dr. Maneesh Jain, President-Elect; and Dr. David Brown, Vice-President.

There's a lot of power in collaboration, it takes an entire team to support the interests of our membership and their patients. We have such a talented and skilled Board of Directors. Each board member continues to amaze me with their unwavering commitment to the association. Building on the strengths of our board and membership will be key to our collective success.

OD: Are you hoping more members will join the active volunteer pool?

MJ: We continue to work on member engagement. Dr. Nicolucci did a great job meeting with the component societies this past year, to actively listen to their perspectives and



Volunteering is part of Dr. Jain's life, and he looks for opportunities wherever he can. Here he is (second from right), at the Special Olympics in 2018 with the Special Smiles team.



gain a greater appreciation for their realities. The ODA is truly a grassroots organization, so interacting with members is important. I want to make sure we continue that.

I also want to connect with dental students. They are the future of our profession. Ontario has two dental schools, and I also want to engage with Ontario students attending dental school out of province, looking to come back.

OD: What advice would you give to new dentists?

MJ: When asked, I usually provide three pieces of advice. First, get involved in your local community – patients love seeing you outside the practice. Interacting and working with members of the community is rewarding, and will often help shape the way you build your practice. Second,



Dr. Jain (second from left) with Councillors before a General Council meeting in Toronto.

join your component society. Component societies enable you to share your experiences and stresses and help you recognize you're not alone. Third, don't overwork yourself. Although easier said than done, try your best to maintain a healthy work-life balance.

OD: Are there any pivotal moments in your life that stand out?

MJ: The birth of my kids was the most defining moment of my life. It is a recognition that life is beyond just you, leaving me inspired to leave the world in a better place than I found it. Throughout the years, I have learned so much from my children. Akash and Ashna make me very proud, not just because of what they have accomplished, but because of their character and the values they embrace. We have travelled extensively with them, visiting historic locations like the Auschwitz concentration camps, the Cambodia Killing Fields, and the Hiroshima Peace Memorial. These experiences have impacted all of us, and have inspired our children to engender positive change. Akash hopes to impact injustice through public policy and law, while Ashna hopes to use engineering to create sustainable solutions that address global issues.

OD: How do you maintain a work-life balance?

MJ: It gets tougher and tougher! To disconnect, I like hiking and listening to audiobooks by our fire pit. However, the true secret to maintaining a good work-life balance is surrounding yourself with people who love you. I'm very fortunate that I have many loving families. My wife and kids are my rock, my extended family is fully engaged



"My wife and kids are my rock," says Dr. Jain.

and supports me, and my work family (my office team and patients) make going to work a pleasure, to the point where work doesn't really feel like "work." Engaging with the ODA family has been no different, they make our work so enjoyable and something to look forward to.

OD: Tell us about your leisure time

MJ: In my spare time, I love to hike and cycle, play sports (especially hockey and basketball), and watch documentaries. However, above all else is travelling with my family. Experiencing different cultures and learning about life beyond your own microcosm is humbling and enriching. I vividly remember our trip to Kenya, where we had the opportunity to visit a local elementary school near Lake



Even as a young family, the Jains always travelled together, visiting countries and landmarks (like the Great Pyramids) around the world. "These experiences have impacted all of us, and have inspired our children," he says.




It's pretty special to be able to journey through life with a partner who also loves to travel. Shikha and Maneesh seize the day whenever they can.

Naivasha. Although we spoke different languages, we found a way to communicate with the schoolchildren. We taught them our national anthem and they taught us theirs. They were particularly fascinated by my wife and daughter's hair texture and the concept of ice hockey. Travelling is a privilege and puts life into perspective. It also gives you an appreciation of how lucky we are to live in Canada.



Skydiving, canyon swinging and climbing to the top of a mountain in Chile. Bring it – that's Dr. Jain's wheelhouse.

OD: What can you tell us that might surprise ODA members?

MJ: I am a thrill seeker! From bungee jumping, whitewater rafting, skydiving, canyon swinging, and mountain biking, I relish the rush. When I'm in Toronto, you'll even occasionally find me skateboarding back and forth to ODA meetings, although (as my wife and children often tell me) this may be a desperate attempt to relive my youth! 

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