

HEALTH

Getting to the root of the issue

A bad early dentistry experience led Kia Pajouhesh to choose it as a career, writes **Josh Jennings**.

Dentist Kia Pajouhesh has vivid childhood memories of attending the dentist but they're for the wrong reasons. Growing up, says Pajouhesh, one of his teeth was so badly rotted he needed a root canal, which didn't sit well with the then nine-year-old.

But protest was futile. It was the UK in the 1970s and it was considered acceptable for dentists and parents to hold children down for procedures.

However, the dentist failed to make the tooth numb enough, and succeeded in causing damage. Pajouhesh says he still remembers every sensation.

Unsurprisingly, he spent his teenage years extremely dentist-phobic. But in spite of this – and because of it – he elected to pursue a dentistry career.

"I wanted to confront my own demons and choose a career where, without wanting to sound clichéd, I felt like I could make a difference.

"And having gone through the experience that I'd gone through as a pre-teenager, I knew dentistry would be an area where I could make

certain decisions in my own career that would ensure no child or adult goes through what I went through."

Pajouhesh is managing director of CBD dentistry Smile Solutions. The practice's client base has grown from fewer than 10 when Pajouhesh opened it in 1995 to more than 60,000.

He divides his time equally between focusing on the clinical care aspect of his business, the science and technology of dentistry and the management side of operating the large-scale practice.

"As the practice has grown, I have had to reduce my clinical hours and spend more time managing the practice," he says. "The management of a practice this size could be left in the hands of a practice manager or in the hands of someone with a commercial or business background but the Smile Solutions model has always been a clinical model.

"And being a clinical model, the person who is managing director and the person who ultimately makes decisions on a commercial basis for this business is ultimately a dentist.



Kia Pajouhesh: His firm now has more than 60,000 clients. Photo: Arsineh Houspian

The fact it's attractive to the dentists who work within it is because it's a clinical model run by clinicians."

Pajouhesh began his dentistry career as an assistant dentist in a mid-sized city practice in the early 1990s. Since establishing his own practice on a shoestring budget 18 months later, business has grown exponentially.

Today, Smile Solutions is the largest single-location practice in

Australia in terms of floor space, clinicians, patients and turnover.

Pajouhesh is now branching out into suburban, regional and rural dental practices that will ultimately operate under the Smile Solutions umbrella nationally.

"I've already started practices in three locations around Melbourne and I'm looking to expand that to as many as 12 to 15 in Victoria within 18 months," he says.