

American Academy of Gold Foil Operators Clinician of the Year Award

Dr Mark Cruz



Mark Cruz

It is an honor for me to present the American Academy of Gold Foil Operators Clinician of the Year Award to Dr Mark A Cruz. He has been my close friend for more than 25 years. This honor is of no surprise to those who know Mark, as he has always been committed to excellence. He embodies excellence, as it defines him in everything he accomplishes,

and at every level of his professional and personal life.

Mark was blessed with a strong father, also a dentist, a loving mother and six siblings. Growing up as the middle child in a large family might have something to do with his trailblazing approach to life—he has always been a leader—on the cutting edge. At the early stages of his professional life, Mark was elected president of the freshman class at the UCLA School of Dentistry, and he has continued in this vein ever since. He has served as president of the Academy of Richard V Tucker Study Clubs, chairman of the Ethics Committee and vice-president of the Orange County Dental Society and has twice served as the president of the Richard V Tucker Cast Gold Study Club of Orange County.

Further evidence of his leadership includes his service to the profession in the following positions: Program Committee for Evidence-based Dentistry International Conference, Academy of Operative Dentistry Scientific Session Program and Seminar Committees, and recently as a Council for the Academy of Operative Dentistry Counselor.

It is clear that Dr Cruz makes things happen. He sees a problem and immediately engages it, analyzes it, dissects it and constructs a solution. He spearheaded the website formation for both the Operative Academy and the Academy of Richard V Tucker Study Clubs. Currently, he is working with several educators and

nationally recognized prosthodontists to write a position paper with the American College of Prosthodontists and the Pacific Coast Society for Prosthodontists, regarding the crisis in dental education and solutions to issues facing pre- and post-doctoral prosthodontics training.

He has been actively involved in research on various topics, including marginal leakage of inlays with various cements, full crown venting and seating techniques, esthetic materials (ceramic systems), veneers and techniques to harmonize anterior esthetics when placing veneers combined with full coverage ceramics. His more recent interests and publications have been in evidence-based-dentistry.

As expected of a Clinician of the Year awardee from the American Academy of Gold Foil Operators, Mark's clinical skills are outstanding. His mentors, Warren Johnson, Richard V Tucker, Richard D Tucker (father and son) and Dave Thorburn have been highly influential teachers. Mark has been the ideal student, and a relentless worker, always seeking a better way to produce excellent results and always working harder than anyone else.

In the 14 years that Mark has been in the Richard V Tucker Cast Gold Study Club of Orange County, he has never missed a single session, and he always operates. In the past seven years, Mark has performed more than 50 direct filling gold restorations, frequently in combination with cast gold. He has performed clinical procedures in cast and direct hold restorations at over 12 Academy meetings, including Canada and Italy.

In addition to a longstanding membership in the American Academy of Gold Foil Operators, Mark is a member of numerous professional organizations, including the Academy of Operative Dentistry, American Dental Association, California Dental Association, Academy of Richard V Tucker Study Clubs, the Orange County Dental Society, Pacific Coast Society of Prosthodontists, the American Academy of Restorative Dentistry and several study groups that focus on implants and occlusion.

Mark has lectured internationally on gold, esthetics and evidence-based dentistry decision-making and currently holds a part-time faculty appointment at UCLA School of Dentistry. He has mentored several study clubs, including the Hawaii and Los Angeles clubs of the Academy of Richard V Tucker Study Clubs. Back in 1986, Mark started an excellence-based restorative dental practice and signed a five-year lease on a building in Monarch Beach, CA, while he was still in dental school—confident that he would pass the board examination? Absolutely!

In addition to his numerous contributions to the dental profession, Mark has contributed significantly to communities in need and has spearheaded the establishment of a village bank in Guatemala City, tutored for the Read Ahead Program, provided dental services via the Flying Samaritans organization and the Thousand Smiles Foundation International Cleft

Palate Clinic in Mexico. Mark is also actively involved with Doctors of Charity. He has been a Rotarian for 18 years and, in 2001, Mark received the Rotarian President's Impact Award for Outstanding Services.

In the past, Mark has climbed mountains—several of them, including Mt Whitney (twice), Mt Baker, Mt Shasta and Mt Ranier. However, since he became a father three years ago, he has been focusing on his family: his wife, Geri Ann and son, Brendon—always knowing what is important in life.

Mark is my closest friend, and I can think of no better recipient of the American Academy of Gold Foil Operators' Clinician of the Year Award than Dr Mark A Cruz.

Please join me in saluting one of dentistry's brightest stars!

Richard G Stevenson, III