

N. Wayne Hiatt Rising Star Award: Dr. Ruchika Khetarpal

By Jackie Best
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Dr. Ruchika Khetarpal is the 2015 recipient of the N. Wayne Hiatt Rising Star Award.

As a young dentist, Dr. Ruchika Khetarpal has become very involved in organized dentistry and taken on active roles at the local and state level. For her efforts, she will receive the Ohio Dental Association N. Wayne Hiatt Rising Star Award on Friday, Sept. 18, at the Callahan Celebration of Excellence, held in conjunction with the 149th ODA Annual Session.

"Dr. Khetarpal joined the Cincinnati Dental Society in 2009 and during the past six years has been very involved both locally and statewide," wrote Dr. Michael Schaeffer, president of the Cincinnati Dental Society in a nomination letter.

Khetarpal said she is honored to be nominated and receiving the award.

"I know and have met other new dentists that are just as deserving of this award," she said. "I am lucky that I have a lot of people in and out of dentistry that I can look up to and learn from. I will continue to learn from those more experienced in organized dentistry and hope to be on the forefront in the future."

Khetarpal said she was always interested in science growing up, but wasn't interested in engineering or business. She wanted to be able to work directly with people and help them, and dentistry allows her to do that.

"I saw that daily interaction and really liked that aspect," she said.

While in high school, Khetarpal applied for and was selected for a six year combined undergraduate and dental school program at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Dentistry. Throughout the six-year program, Khetarpal worked as a

dental assistant and hygiene assistant.

After graduating from dental school in 2007, she wanted to expose herself to different experiences, so she moved to New York City for a general practice residency program at New York Medical College – Metropolitan Hospital. The hospital is a level 2 trauma center, and Khetarpal had the opportunity to work with oral and maxillofacial surgeons and three general practice residents while there.

After her residency, Khetarpal decided she wanted to move back to the Midwest to be closer to her family and also for a more stable job and lifestyle. In 2008, she became an associate at Colerain Family Dentistry in Cincinnati and purchased the practice in 2009. She added a second office location to her practice in 2010.

Khetarpal said getting to know her patients and easing their fears is her favorite part about being a dentist.

"As dentists, we still have the beauty of spending time with patients," she said.

Khetarpal is involved with organized dentistry on the local and state level. She serves on the Membership Committee with the Cincinnati Dental Society and the Council on Membership Services with the ODA. She also serves as a delegate to the ODA. Khetarpal is also helping organize a membership event at the 2015 ODA Annual Session – Bollywood Meets Columbus.

"Dr. Khetarpal has demonstrated strong leadership skills on our Council and Membership Committee," Schaeffer wrote. "She was instrumental in the success of our 'Get to Know the Cincinnati Dental Society' event in 2014 and is on our task force for developing this year's event. ... She has been serving on the ODA Council for Membership Services since 2012, and has been an advocate for young dentists."

Khetarpal said organized dentistry is important to ensure the profession remains strong into the future.

"I think it's important because we've made such an investment in our education, so much money and time, literally blood, sweat, tears," she said. "We need to really back the profession of dentistry and make sure we still have the opportunities we have in our career and field 20 or 30 years for now and for our children."

In addition to the ODA, ADA and CDS, Khetarpal is a member of the American Association of Women Dentists, American Academy of Facial Esthetics and the Spear Study Club.

Khetarpal is also very involved in community service activities. She has participated in the Cincinnati Dental Society's "Leave No Vet Behind" program and Give

Kids a Smile events. She also provides free dental care at the Good Samaritan Free Health Center.

Khetarpal has also been active with the Delta Sigma Delta Fraternity and volunteers with the Queen City Concert Band providing free concerts for the community, and the Young Professional Kitchen Cabinet under Cincinnati Mayor John Cranley on the Neighborhoods committee.

Outside of dentistry, she enjoys playing tennis, participating in a community band and traveling. She has been married to her husband, Kaushik Sarkar, for two years.

The Rising Star Award recognizes a young leader in dentistry with outstanding leadership and initiative and a strong commitment to volunteerism within the community and the profession. This person must demonstrate promise for continued and future accomplishments within the dental profession, and must have been in practice for 10 years or less.

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