

Green Health Care Spotlight

Dr. Steven Koos MD, DDS: Green Dentistry Pioneer

By Morola Adjibodou



"When people hear green office they think tree-hugger, hippie, granola—no one thinks chic, modern, state-of -the-art," jokes Steven Koos MD, DDS, a 2008 graduate of the [Leadership In Green Health Care](#) course. Dr. Koos and his partners are the founders of Ora Oral Surgery & Implant Studio, the first green dental surgery clinic in the U.S., located in the heart of Chicago. Through extensive research, trial and experimentation, Dr. Koos retrofitted a former tannery built in 1919 into an elegant space that is often mistaken for a bar or restaurant. It was important for him to show people that composite wood and EcoResin can look as luxurious and inviting as conventional materials.

Dr. Koos describes his experience building Ora Studio as a labor of love, but is quick to acknowledge that he faced many challenges. Neither he nor his contractor had experience constructing green buildings, so he used LEED standards to guide construction, the Green Guide for Health Care for developing green office protocols, and Health Care Without Harm's environmentally preferable purchasing list. Dr. Koos recognizes that a green office is much more than eco-friendly building materials. He believes that the people who work in the building are vital to the greening process. "We are trying to educate all of our staff to be in tune with sustainability, so they know why it is important that we chose formaldehyde-free and chlorine-free agrifibers and non-pvc materials".

[Leadership In Green Health Care](#) is an interactive online course which includes forums for visionaries to collaborate on strategies for effective change. The course is designed as a learning community so that students and alumni can communicate directly with each other to share ideas as well as relevant resources. Everyone learned from Dr. Koos when he offered, "We as clinicians, have a responsibility to investigate any and every new piece of equipment and material on the market." Dr. Koos only adds new technology to his practice if they meet the following criteria:

- Is this better for the patient? (i.e. non-toxic, less invasive, more preventative, free of harm, etc.)
- Is this more efficient in carrying out treatment? (i.e less costly to operate, fewer resources used, more energy efficient)
- Does this improve treatment outcomes? (i.e. shorter treatment, increased chance of successful outcome, less reliance on invasive outcomes, less dependence on pharmaceutical therapy)
- Is there evidence-based research behind it?
- Is this better for the environment?

The Leadership course emphasizes that sustainability is not only applicable to large medical institutions, but is crucial for smaller practices like Ora Studio. Dr. Koos exemplifies that with relevant resources, health care professionals can provide high quality, cost-effective, and sustainable medical care. Dr. Koos is a true leader; he is a member of Practice Greenhealth, EcoDentistry Association, and a partner of the Teleosis Institute. We are proud to spotlight his pioneering work.

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