



# Dr. Brad Bryan

Sunnybrook Dentistry & Braces, Jackson, MS

## Staying Humble While Helping

**D**r. Brad Bryan is humble when speaking about the dental care he provides to underserved patients and how he mentors and trains other dentists to provide the same high-quality care for children and their families who are often covered by Medicaid and/or Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). It's a career he may not have envisioned early in his life, but now it shines bright not just as a career choice he made, but a heartfelt mission to make a difference in people's lives.

As a young child in Jackson, Mississippi, he remembers his dentist who was new to the profession when he first started treating Bryan. "I felt like I was one of his first patients," Bryan said. Fast forward 15 or more years, as Bryan developed a love for math and science and began thinking about what profession to pursue, he asked that same dentist when he knew he wanted to be a dentist. "I thought his answer was so funny. He said he knew he wanted to be a dentist about six months after he got his dental degree."

Still, the thought stuck with Bryan, but he did not have any family in the medical field to base what being a dentist would really be like, so he enrolled in a program through the University of Mississippi Medical Center that allowed him to shadow dentists in the community. Eventually, he felt a calling and went to dental school at the University of Mississippi.

## Helping Kids to Not be Afraid

After graduation, Bryan worked for a few years in a private practice that was becoming more focused on serving individuals extremely fearful of coming to the dentist. He received additional training in parenteral sedation to provide full-mouth restoration while patients are sedated. Soon, it became apparent that

the focus wasn't the best fit for Bryan. "What I wanted to do was contribute so that kids didn't grow up to be the adults that I was seeing in private practice," Bryan explained. "If I could help people avoid becoming those patients, then I would be successful."

He joined Benevis in 2007 because the company was dedicated to providing dental care to underserved patients, especially children. His first assignment was at their Sunnybrook Dentistry practice in Tulepo, MS, which opened his eyes to the staggering need for dental care for underserved communities. "It was nothing for 100 patients to come through the door on any day. Just seeing that opened my eyes to how many folks really need our services."

## Staying Connected to His Patients

After about a year in Tulepo, Bryan came back to the Jackson area where he had been in private practice as Sunnybrook Dentistry expanded there, eventually assuming leadership roles to recruit and mentor other dentists. Despite his administrative duties, Dr. Bryan remains deeply connected to his patients, finding fulfillment in providing direct care, with licenses in Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas so he can continue to see patients.

"My wife tells me all the time she sees a big difference in me when I stop the e-mails and just go and see patients for a week with one of our teams. It helps to remind me why I got into it in the first place. It's extremely gratifying."

Early in Bryan's career, he remembers being surprised to learn that some dental practices had separate days, times, or even locations to see Medicaid patients versus those with private insurance. "When I joined Benevis, often the patients we saw

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had desperately been looking for someone to help them.” Bryan said that oftentimes, the child had a special need that would make providers reluctant to see them, in addition to being covered by Medicaid. Benevis is among the few dental organizations that accept Medicaid and provides care to patients with special needs. “Your heart goes out to them because, as a dentist, you feel like there’s a dentist around every corner. But the truth for our patients is that the dentists that are around the corner likely don’t help the people that we’re helping.”

One patient that comes to mind for Bryan could not speak audibly and used sign language. Bryan knew some sign language, so the patient always requested him. Now as a clinical leader for Benevis, Bryan includes common dental-related signs in his training materials for other dentists. Now, Bryan gets feedback that some dentists are using apps to learn other languages so they can better communicate with their patients. “Those stories have really stood out to me over time because those patients have a need, but they really have an appreciation when you go the extra mile to explain what you’re doing, and you take pride in the work that the clinic is doing.”

### Dedicated to Going the Extra Mile

His dedication to meeting the needs of the community extends beyond his day job’s walls. He is a life-long Eagle Scout and serves as a Boy Scouts mentor. In addition, Bryan helped get the dental clinic at Caring Hands Clinic through First Baptist Jackson off the ground. The clinic provided care to any patients who needed it, regardless of if they had insurance or not. “Our Chief Dental Officer, Dr. Mayfield, would let me take instruments from the the Jackson clinic after they were sterilized to the Caring Hands clinic. The next day, I would take the instruments back early in the morning, somebody would meet me and help me sterilize them for the rest of the day.” Bryan remembers that some patients at the clinic would line up first thing in the morning to be seen later that evening.

Benevis started Sharing Smiles Day eight years ago to fill a similar need, providing care to uninsured children and their families. Sharing Smiles Day will be held on May 19, 2024, this year.

In his leadership position as Vice President of Dental Performance, Bryan works with the company’s district dental directors to ensure all doctors are providing robust, quality care. If a dentist needs additional help to learn a new skill or do a skill better, they are provided mentorship and training. “We’re trying to grow folks that are in an associate doctor role up to hopefully one day to be a district dental director. In my opinion, it is a gratifying position in the company where you can flex your leadership muscle and hopefully expand access to care by making other doctors the best doctor they can be.”

Reflecting on his journey, Bryan acknowledges that his background may differ from some of his patients, but his passion remains. “I’ve known people that grew up as Medicaid recipients and they have a real passion for helping our patients. Sometimes I almost felt guilty that wasn’t my background but, I feel a passion for helping them.”

For Dr. Bryan, the goal remains—to ensure that every patient receives the highest quality of care, regardless of their socioeconomic status. “The end goal is to ensure that our patients are receiving great quality of care, the kind of care they would receive if they had all the money in the world and could pick any dentist. I truly believe that.”



### About Benevis

Benevis is a leading dental healthcare delivery organization for practices focused on delivering life-changing oral care and orthodontics to underserved communities. Through comprehensive care and operational services that expand access to dentistry, Benevis has a 20-year history of providing the highest quality care to approximately 5 million children and adults. Its network reaches more than 100 locally branded dental offices across the U.S. that deliver treatment through 1.2 million visits each year. Benevis also advocates for programs and legislation that ensure all families have access to the oral healthcare they need and deserve.

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