GLAO Leadership Spotlight – Wellington Rody Jr.

Where are you from originally and where are you practicing now?

I am originally from Brazil where I practiced orthodontics for 10 years prior to joining full-time academia in North America. Currently, I serve as Department Chair and practicing orthodontist at the University of Pittsburgh School of Dental Medicine.

Where did you train? And what was your favorite part about your program?

I received my dental training at the Federal University of Espirito Santo-UFES (Vitoria, Brazil) and two orthodontic specialty certificates: one from the Catholic University of Minas Gerais (Belo Horizonte, Brazil) and one from the University of Florida (Gainesville FL). In addition, I have a Master of Science (MS) degree in Oral Biology from the University of Washington School of Dentistry (Seattle WA).

What inspired you to pursue orthodontics?

Orthodontics is a unique specialty that allows us to have a dramatic impact on the life of our patients. Moreover, it is a specialty that fosters doctor-patients' relationships and inter-disciplinary collaborations with a wide range of medical and dental fields.

What brought you to your current practice/teaching location?

Pitt School of Dental Medicine's commitment to clinical excellence, translational research and dental education is well known nationally and internationally; thus, I feel privileged with this unique opportunity to work alongside an incredible leadership team, students, faculty and staff to shape the orthodontic department's future.

What is one thing that you did over the last year to improve your practice/school?

There have been few key accomplishments as Dept. Chair that I'm particularly proud of at Pitt Dental. First, I was able to strengthen alumni relations and secure philanthropic donations that allowed us to invest in our department infra-structure and implement an in-house orthodontic digital laboratory. The second accomplishment was the enhancement of clinical workflows in the graduate orthodontic clinic which contributed to an upward trend in productivity, improved care for our patients, as well as improved patient experiences to the orthodontic residents. Last, but not least, while also serving as residency program director at Pitt, I spearheaded a curriculum revision for the orthodontic residency that strengthened our program's emphasis on interdisciplinary collaboration and resulted in a successful accreditation of the program in 2025.

What hobbies do you enjoy outside of orthodontics?

I have a passion for long-distance hiking. My biggest accomplishment was a to complete 180 miles of the St. James Way in Northern Spain. This is approximately half of the way. Hopefully, I will find time to complete the other half one day!

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If you could have one superpower, what would it be?

The ability to tele transport myself to different cities and parts of the world at any time.

What is the thing that you are most excited about within orthodontics?

As an academic orthodontist, I feel fortunate to be in a position where I can inspire and educate the next generation of specialists.

Why are you involved in the GLAO?

As an orthodontist that transitioned from private practice to full-time academia, I believe I've cultivated a wide range of clinical experiences and a depth of expertise in teaching, service, research and leadership initiatives. Moreover, I am particularly thankful to the AAO throughout my journey for providing me with countless opportunities for professional growth as a clinician and academician, which ultimately led me to my leadership roles. Therefore, I believe serving as GLAO director will give me the opportunity to do my small part in supporting this amazing organization.