

Dangers of dental tourism

Due to the rising costs of dental and medical care, there is a trend for patients to travel to other countries for dental and medical care. Unfortunately, when one leaves the United States in search of a "cheap fix" the results can often be disastrous. In this country, we have the benefits of high quality healthcare education, and healthcare professionals must meet strict requirements for maintaining licensure (40 hours of approved continuing education every two years in Ohio.)

In dentistry, I have witnessed and heard many reports of patients traveling to Mexico, the Philippines, or other countries to have major dental work completed. Since many clinicians outside the United States are not members of the American Dental Association or other American professional organizations, they may not have the same ethical standards that American dentists honor. Therefore, this discount care is often substandard, and the patients are not protected by FDA regulation of materials and medications used.



Dr. Kevin Huff

Dentist

I can recall one case in particular where a patient took a treatment plan that was presented here in the United States by a very well-respected dentist to a dentist in Mexico who performed the treatment exactly as outlined on the treatment plan without even performing an initial examination or taking dental x-rays. The patient returned home and had many problems with the dental work, leaving them in pain and with infection. The patient sought my opinion because they were angry with their previous American dentist for not taking them back as a patient after they had gone to Mexico for treatment and felt that the problems stemmed from the original diagnosis. The whole case had to be retreated. During retreatment, root canals were found to be filled with wooden toothpicks, and

crowns had wide gaps at the edges that were causing pain and sensitivity. The problem was not the original diagnosis, but the work itself!

Personally, I am thankful that we live in a country where those professionals responsible for our healthcare are well-trained and well-educated. Free trade and the spirit of competition provides for excellent healthcare. Freedom of education and capitalism rewards commitment to continuing education and allows some clinicians to be set apart from others. However, even those who choose to maintain minimal licensure standards provide a quality of care that clearly exceeds that of many other countries. As a dentist, and as a patient, I am very thankful to be an American!

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