

# Ask Dr. Huff....



**Kevin D. Huff, D.D.S.**

## **Why won't receptionists quote prices over the phone?**

Dentistry is a very special profession. We provide intangible services as healthcare providers such as diagnosis and disease therapy, and we provide a wide range of tangible services like prostheses of various types. Dentistry truly is a blend of art, knowledge of the sciences, psychology, and technical skills. In order to provide the patients we serve with the level of care

that each dentist chooses, fees for our services need to be assessed. Each dentist establishes what he or she feels are fair fees, and some prefer to allow dental insurance companies to establish what fees are appropriate.

"Price shopping" to choose a dentist is fraught with problems. Every individual presents with unique situations, conditions, and challenges and under varying circumstances. For example, a patient recently called asking how much a crown costs in my office because she had been told that she needed several. After finally agreeing to come in for an examination, uncontrolled gum disease prevented ethical crown therapy. It really would not have mattered what the fee for a crown was because crowns were not an appropriate therapy in this situation. Furthermore, one dentist's fees for one type of procedure may be higher than another dentist's for the same procedures, but the majority of the other procedures offers are less. For instance, maybe crowns seem to be lower in price, but fillings in general are very high relative to other dentists, for one reason or another. In the long run, the "cheaper" dentist may end up being much more expensive in the long run.

There many types of crowns, many types of "fillings", and several different types of dentures that dentists can provide. In my practice, for example, I currently offer six different types of crowns, two different types of dentures, three whitening options, five different types of bite splints, six kinds of "fillings", and several different types of therapy that the dental hygienist performs. The dentist's job is to assess each patient individually and then to develop a customized treatment plan that utilizes appropriate care and services for each patient's needs, based on what he or she is trained and able to perform, the patient's ability to invest in their own care, and what is ethical and adequate care.

Since every dentist has different levels of training, runs his/her business with a unique treatment philosophy, and views each patient differently, it is virtually impossible to compare one dentist to another based on fees for a particular service alone. A great way to determine if a dentist is right for you is to listen to your friends, family, and people you trust. Usually, people are very happy to share their dental experiences. Once you hear about a dentist who sounds interesting to you, do some homework and check

them out before calling the office for an appointment. Check their credentials, training, etc. The internet is a wonderful tool, and sometimes the phonebook can be helpful. A phone call to the office is also appropriate. A great deal can be learned from a first telephone call to a dental office. Is the receptionist helpful, energetic, and enthusiastic about where she works, or does it sound like she only works for the dentist because she has to? Ask about the dentist and his/her credentials and areas of subspecialty. Of course, the only way to truly decide if a dentist is right for you is to actually meet him or her, express your concerns, and listen to their answers. Many dentists are willing to meet with patients without a fee for a pre-appointment consultation because we like to get to know our patients before beginning any treatment as well.

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