

# About second opinions

Second opinions are a wonderful and appropriate tool for patients and dentists to use in deciding the best course of treatment to follow. For example, fresh perspective is helpful when a patient is considering treatment but is not satisfied that the original dentist has given them all the appropriate options.

A true second opinion should be objectively rendered by a second provider who has no intention of recruiting that particular patient. Sometimes price shopping is confused with seeking true second opinions. Ethically, these are two drastically different purposes for seeking a dental evaluation. Price shoppers have difficulty perceiving the value for dental services, which may be the fault of the dentist or the patient's unrealistic perspective. Unfortunately, many dentists also misunderstand the meaning of "second opinion" and treat a patient seeking a bona fide second opinion as a new patient seeking



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to become a patient of theirs.

Here is an ethical second opinion scenario: A patient presents with a problem identified by another dentist who may have referred the patient for a second opinion, or the patient has come on their own volition. The patient brings acceptable and legible copies of the original diagnostic records and diagnosis so that the second opinion dentist can "compare apples with apples." The first obligation of the doctor offering the second opinion is to make certain that he/she is as qualified as the primary dentist to render a legitimate opinion. After an objective diagnosis is made by the second dentist, the primary treatment plan may be evaluated for appropriateness. If

the original treatment plan is reasonable, albeit possible different from that preferred by the second dentist, and ethical second opinion would support the primary dentist. If the original plan is inappropriate, or if a critical diagnosis is missed, the patient should be informed that there is a variation of opinion and why. However, it would be unethical and unprofessional for a second opinion to include a fee comparison. Reasonable fees for rendering a second opinion should be expected with the understanding that a second opinion is not the same as a new patient examination.

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*For questions about dental health or to schedule a complementary consultation, call 330-364-2011, visit [www.doctorhuff.net](http://www.doctorhuff.net), or ask your regular dentist.*