

## An Art and a Science to Dentistry...

A few years back, there was a news report on an Austin television station about dentistry. Basically, it was an expose where a reporter went to several different dentists for exams and then compared the proposed treatment plans. The hook of the story was that each dentist had a very different plan to fix the reporter's teeth. As a patient, I can certainly see the frustration here. How would you know who is right and which plan to choose? As a dentist, I can see the frustration here. For every decayed, broken, or missing tooth there are usually a half dozen correct ways to fix that tooth. If I remember statistics correctly, the more broken teeth or health problems, the farther apart each dentist's plan will diverge. Dentistry truly is an art and a science.

My wife and I went to the same dental school. We had the same classes, mostly the same professors, and most of the same learning experiences. The only real difference I can think of is that she dragged me along on some of the boring academic stuff and I returned the favor by helping her with lab work that she preferred to delegate. Upon graduation, we have attended most of our continuing education together, meaning we have heard the same updates to our education. In the instances where we attend different courses, we always spend a good amount of time teaching each other what we have learned. Nothing beats a Saturday night with a bottle of wine, a course manual on root canals, and the one you love.

Based on our educations, we should do things the same...but we don't. Actually, as far as fixing teeth goes, I'd guess we are on the same page about ninety percent of the time. Mostly, we will look at a dental problem and come up with the same answer. So what happens the other ten percent of the time? As confusing as this may sound, when we disagree, we are both right.

When it comes to your oral health, there is an assortment of correct treatments to choose from. Whether you are talking about replacing teeth, treating gum disease, or fixing a toothache, there are generally a handful of scientifically proven, valid treatments for any problem. It is never wrong to ask your doctor, "Doc, is there another way to fix this?"

As with anything else in life, there is almost always another way. As dentists, we try to give our patients all of their options and summarize the pros and cons of each option. If you know your options, you can decide what is best for you. We love informed, educated patients and a second opinion is always welcome. As a matter of fact, I seem to get a lot of second opinions at the office. Now that I think about it, I seem to also get a lot of second opinions around the house. Maybe someone should tell Dr. Jennifer that we are usually both right...

Until next time, keep smiling.

-Please send comments and/or criticism to Dr. Chip at [ParrishDental@aol.com](mailto:ParrishDental@aol.com).