

Your Dental Team...

Two dentists and a chiropractor were having dinner...I know this sounds like the start of yet another bad dental joke, but it's actually true. We often meet with a variety of non-dental practitioners to figure out how to best treat our patients. No, we do not regularly consult a medical doctor about a routine filling, but we do like to talk to docs about some of the more complicated things that we treat. We live in an age where it often takes a team to determine the best course of action for complex problems and we believe in bringing in any expert we can find to get our patients the care they deserve.

It seems like every day a new study comes out that links some form of dental problem to some sort of overall health problem. It is also often common for dentists to see patients on a more regular basis than physicians. I see my dentist practically every night. Well, I'm an exception to the rule, but most of us get two to four dental cleanings a year versus one annual physical at our primary doctor's office. In my mind, that means we dentists need to see the whole picture, as well as the teeth. I have no plan on treating high blood pressure or diabetes, but I can at least send you in the right direction if I recognize the problem. Here are a few referrals that seem to be common lately.

Primary Care Doctors – Our healthcare system starts with these frontline warriors. They are the key to managing your overall health. We often send patients back to their family doctor to have possible health issues checked out that we observe in our office.

Ear, Nose, and Throat Specialists – You would be amazed at how many airway issues we see in our dental office. From adults with symptoms of sleep apnea to kids with oversized tonsils affecting their jaw growth, we see everything in between. Many of our dental x-rays actually clearly show some of these problems. We don't diagnose, but we do refer to the experts.

Chiropractors – One of the most life affecting problems we treat is TMD or jaw joint pain. Nobody lives happily dealing with constant pain. Often, the way the jaw is working can have a negative effect on your spine. Imagine a stack of poker chips. Now imagine the top few chips (your head, upper jaw, lower jaw, and neck) are all out of line with the rest of the stack. What is the rest of the stack going to do? We often catch these problems early when diagnosing kids for braces or later for adults with jaw problems. A good chiropractor often helps.

Physical and Massage Therapists – See the above paragraph. When the parts aren't lined up, the muscles get stretched or knotted in all the wrong directions. Massage and exercise therapy can do wonders.

This is but a short list of people who have helped us to take care of the patients in our practice. If I had space, I'd name and thank them all. As it is, my time is up. Until next time, keep smiling.

-Comments can be sent to Drs. Parrish at ParrishDental@aol.com.