

Response to Canadian Association of Orthodontists Attack on General Dentists

CAO FRONTAL ATTACK ON GENERAL DENTISTS

I have recently read on the Canadian Association of Orthodontists website several ads where the orthodontic profession is demeaning general dentists who offer orthodontic services to their patients. These ads were posted to "Blogs" on September 6, 2017.

First Ad:

Patient whose daughter needs braces talking with hairdresser. Belittling the fact that the dentist said her daughter needed braces. Hairdresser continues to demean patients dentist by stating that she also has "done some fillings and braces too".

Final statement: "But if you want to avoid repairs later, don't trust anyone but an orthodontist with your child's smile." FIND AN ORTHODONTIST

It is hard for me to imagine that the orthodontic profession that depends on general dentists for referrals would show such lack of respect for their dental colleagues. I think the expression is also "Do not bite the hand that feeds you". Most general dentists go to university for at least 8 years in order to earn their professional degree. The dental boards give general dentists the right to offer orthodontics, periodontics, prosthodontics and endodontics as well as other health care services to their patients. My questions is that when our dental boards give us permission to treat patients malocclusions, noxious habits, etc., why does the Canadian Association of Orthodontists feel the need to try to humiliate us in the eyes of the public. Total lack of professionalism on the part of this orthodontic organization.

Second Ad:

The patient whose daughter needed braces had a discussion with a fireman regarding her problems. Nonchalantly the fireman said, "I think I can help. I've put out fires and I've put braces on kids teeth too."

It ends by stating: "If you do not want to risk an emergency, don't trust anyone but an Orthodontist with your child's smile" FIND AN ORTHODONTIST

The ad obviously implies that you would not go to a fireman or a dentist for braces. It also implies that if you go to a dentist for braces you are at risk for an emergency. This is just an unbelievable, totally unethical and unprofessional attacks on general dentists who offer orthodontics to their patients. I should like to point out to the CAO that regarding our patients we decide where we want to send them for all specialty services that they require. How does the CAO expect the general dentist that they rely on for referrals expect anything but a severe backlash from these insulting and demeaning ads? I think the legal profession refers to this as defamation of character. The CAO is defaming the character and reputation of general dentists. Disgraceful!

Third Ad:

The patient whose son needed some extensive dental work. The mechanic stated "I've fixed up lots of kids teeth too". I was so relieved I told him to go ahead and fix the overbite. It ends by stating: "But if you want to avoid repairs later, don't trust anyone but an orthodontist with your child's smile. FIND AN ORTHODONTIST

Implying do not trust your child's smile with your general dentist. This is a serious violation of ethics in my opinion. It basically implies that general dentists are not capable of doing quality orthodontics. This, of course, is not correct. General dentists can do excellent orthodontics. The key is take comprehensive records, make the correct diagnosis and only treat the simple cases. Some orthodontists are running scared and the insecure ones I am betting are the ones that wanted to create these unethical ads to try to discourage patients from seeking orthodontic treatment from their general dentist. Some orthodontists are going to have to accept the fact that seems apparent to all other specialties in dentistry that specialists are important to treat the complex cases but the general dentists can be trained to treat the simple cases.

I think all of us who practice orthodontics can agree that orthodontics is an essential health service. It has been estimated that as many as 70% of children by age 12 have some form of malocclusion as a result of noxious habits, airway obstructions, underdeveloped jaws, transversely or sagittally. Research has shown that malocclusions worsen with age if untreated. My experience of teaching in Canada and U.S. for the past 35 years is that the majority of orthodontists do not treat children in the mixed dentition but rather prefer to

treat in the permanent dentition. I believe the general dentists are filling that void by offering to help improve the health of our younger patients.

The other problem is that the orthodontists are located mostly in the urban areas. The general dentists in rural areas have to do orthodontics or the patients do not receive proper care. Therefore the general dentists have to provide these essential services since the orthodontists cannot.

The orthodontic departments in 3 dental schools in Canada, UBC, UWO and Toronto all decided recently to stop teaching undergraduate dentists how to put brackets on teeth. This is obviously a self-serving approach which I think sends the wrong message.

Can you imagine if all the departments in the dental school including Endo, Perio, Prosthodontics, etc., all got together and decided, like the Orthodontic Department, not to teach us to diagnose and treat patients? We would graduate not being able to provide comprehensive care to our patients.

Basically the orthodontic departments are saying we do not want to teach you how to treat patients so you will have no choice but to refer all the orthodontic patients to us. Recently in November there were 77 dentists that attended my 3 orthodontic courses in Toronto. Obviously general dentists in the province of Ontario are seeing the need to incorporate orthodontics into their general practices in order to help their patients, particularly the children.

I wonder how general dentists are going to feel about the orthodontists this year who thanks him for referrals by giving them gifts at Christmas knowing how they were defamed to the public through the ads that appeared on the CAO website. This is a serious violation of ethics and professionalism. The creators of the ads know that the public depends on social media for much of their information today. That is what makes this attack even more serious. These ads are truly shameful. You do not see the other specialties such as perio, endo and prosthodontics publically mocking general dentists for treating patients even though they are not specialists. The other specialties do not claim publicly they are superior to general dentists. Surely this disgraceful behaviour is not good for the overall image of the dental profession as a whole. Basically, these unprofessional ads are very self-serving and completely unethical.

If the orthodontists want respect they must first respect the general dentists who are referring them patients. These ads are totally disrespecting the general dentists who are the backbone of our profession.

These ads appear to me to be an act of desperation from a specialty who does not think their excellent work speaks for itself but feels they have to demean general dentists in order to look good in the eyes of the public. I predict that this will go down in history as a serious error in judgment on behalf of the CAO. I know many fine reputable orthodontists that I am certain are as horrified as any general dentist with these unprofessional ads. It appears to be an act of desperation. If your practice is not busy as you would like, I recommend you look in the mirror. That is your answer not your general dentist down the street who is referring you all the difficult cases.

I am deeply disappointed in the CAO for their attempt to discredit the general dentists who support their practices with referrals. I would strongly suggest that they fire the perpetrator of this assault against general dentists, take down the ads and apologize profusely for your error in judgment. Only then do I believe that we can get back to business as usual. We all went into the profession to help patients. Let's get back to why we all entered the profession.

Remember "The enemy is malocclusion and not each other."

Yours sincerely,

Brock Rondeau