

WHAT PRICE DENTURES?

PART OF A CONTINUING SERIES OF OPEN LETTERS TO THE PEOPLE OF ONTARIO CONCERNING AN UNJUST AND UNPRECEDENTED LAW WHICH DENIES YOU FREEDOM OF CHOICE WITH RESPECT TO DENTURE SERVICES.

The following is intended to provide additional information to the public concerning the long-standing controversy between the Denturist Society of Ontario and the Ontario Dental Association and the Royal College of Dental Surgeons, as to whether or not denturists should be granted legal status.

One of the great problems facing the Government and the people of this province is the soaring cost of dental services. Several factors may be isolated and held responsible for the fact that the costs for necessary dental health services have reached the point where many people simply cannot afford adequate dental care. Our concern, however, is with one aspect only of this multi-faceted problem — the provision of artificial dentures for those who have lost some or all of their teeth through disease, accident or neglect. This is not to say that this one area is not important. Providing dentures to those in need of such appliances is a very important part of dental care. However, it is in this area where some of the highest costs for dental services occur.

There are several reasons why this is so and it is our intention to enumerate at least a few of these.

There is, as has been generally conceded, a critical shortage of dentists everywhere throughout Canada. Ontario is no exception. Indeed, it is a well established fact that Ontario's more than 3,000 dentists cannot begin to cope with the dental needs of the more than seven million persons who reside in this province. Ontario residents generally are not getting nearly adequate or proper dental care. This index of neglect logically ranges upwards in direct proportion to the availability of dental services from a low of one dentist for every 1,900 persons resident in urban York County, to a high of one dentist for every 25,000 persons in Lennox, Addington County.

What then, is the public to think of the dental profession's announced intention to establish ten (10) so-called low cost denture clinics (only one in Metropolitan Toronto) throughout Ontario as an alternative to denturists? Denturists denounce this move by the dental profession as bizarre! Such tactics are clearly intended to perpetuate the conflict of interest which our previous advertisement alleged was occurring almost daily in the practise of dentistry. Namely, the combination in practice by the same person of dental surgery and preventative dentistry with the supply of artificial teeth. As was stated by the Denturist Society of Ontario, "In no other branch of medicine does such practice exist" and "The scope of the dental surgeon should be entirely in the medical and surgical sphere with the control of dental and oral disease as

its aim, and to prevent as far as possible, the NEED FOR ARTIFICIAL DENTURES."

There is a pressing need for dentists to devote the bulk of their time to the practise of preventative dentistry. We contend, however, that most dentists are not devoting any significant time to this vital area of dental health care, and the following information will serve to fully substantiate this contention.

AN INDICTMENT

Although the information contained in this portion of our presentation will perhaps not be viewed by some dentists as a disgrace to their profession, we believe that it will be accepted by the public as nothing less than an indictment of the dental profession of Ontario and elsewhere, notwithstanding the obvious dedication and sincerity of a minority of practitioners.

A report by the Ontario Periodontists Society to the Ontario Dental Association marked "CONFIDENTIAL — NOT FOR PUBLIC RELEASE", which the Ontario Dental Association has deliberately tried to suppress, revealed these alarming facts.

1. Periodontal disease accounts for the major amount of tooth loss in adults.
2. 75% - 100% of all adults have periodontal disease.
3. 95% of children (ages 5 - 14) exhibit some degree of gingivitis. 25.2% have destructive periodontal disease (loss of attachment).
4. There are only 42 periodontists in Ontario, who at their combined maximum could treat only 10,000 - 12,000 patients a year.
5. In the U.S.A. only 6.7% of a general practitioner's total practice time was spent performing any phase of periodontics.

6. A study involving almost 3,000 dentists revealed that only 2.5% of patients had received periodontal treatment in 1969.

7. In Ontario dentists averaged less than 2% of their practice time in the treatment of periodontal disease.

8. It was most disappointing to learn that recent graduates were neglecting periodontal disease.

9. More and more frequently patients are complaining to the Ontario Dental Association because they had been led to believe that all their dental disease was being cared for. **MANY ARE THREATENING LEGAL ACTION BASED ON NEGLIGENCE.**

As the foregoing information would indicate, it is tragic that the end result of poor dental care, which manifests itself in dentures becoming necessary for so many of the public, should be so lucrative to the profession.

FURTHER SUBSTANTIATION

As was stated in previous paragraphs, there are some practising dentists who are very much dedicated to the dental health of their patients. Several of these have been moved to express concern over current trends in the dental profession. An article which appeared in a Toronto newspaper two or three years ago published the following comments:

Dr. Peter Currie, a London, Ontario dentist, said, "many dentists may be neglecting preventative dentistry. The present fee scales may be to blame. All things considered, it's more profitable to pull a tooth than to work for 30 minutes on a filling."

Dr. Stuart MacGregor, a respected Toronto Dental Clinician, pointed out that making prosthetic appliances or dentures is the most lucrative work in dentistry. "I can see little hope of people retaining their teeth to a ripe old age when the fee for prosthetic dentistry exceeds the fee for preventative measure."

Dr. Miles R. Markley, prominent United States dentist told a Toronto conference, "Too many teeth are being sacrificed." He quoted a study of 1,000 failures in amalgam fillings, which showed that 85 per cent were caused by improper preparation.

Dr. A. N. Blair of Alliston, Ontario, who has been in practice for more than 30 years is one of the profession's most vociferous critics. "About 50 per cent of all extractions are unnecessary. For instance, I had a patient, a young man, who had all his upper teeth removed and was told that the lowers would also have to be extracted. I took an X-ray and sent them to the University of Toronto School of Dentistry Graduates Consultation Service for an opinion. None of them required extractions."

The argument advanced by the dental profession that denturists ought not to be granted legal status, is an argument which any person, suffering either the discomfort of ill fitting dentures or having no dentures at all, and where even the daily routine of eating a meal becomes an exercise in frustration and pain, is unlikely ever to accept as valid.

AN ALTERNATIVE

Allowing denturists to practise openly without fear of prosecution and fines and thereby making it possible for a far greater number of persons to avail themselves of our services than is presently the case, would not only result in savings to the public of literally tens of thousands of dollars annually, but would also mean that many unfortunate persons who, at present, are forced to do without these necessities of life would have the opportunity to secure functional, comfortable dentures at prices they can afford.

We appeal therefore to you, the reader of this advertisement, to assist us in our efforts to bring to an end what is clearly an abuse perpetrated by a few at the expense of so many under the guise of protecting the public interest.

We urge you to write the Premier of the Province of Ontario and your member of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, expressing your support for our services in the hope that this anomalous situation will shortly be corrected.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PHONE OR CONTACT:

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