



Why all that time for my first appointment?

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I found out early on that my dental school education left me deficient in having answers for many of my patients, as their dental health slid backwards in spite of my best efforts. I had no good answers for treating patients with teeth wear and bite-related problems such as migraines; head and neck pain; dizziness and ringing in the ears; continuing cavities and bleeding gums in spite of the best of teeth cleanings and home care instructions. I was also starting to realize, even back in the 70's, that oral health was connected to one's general health. So, my evolution from a traditional, "fix it" type of dentist to taking on a more holistic view of dentistry through learning more about the biology of the oral environment and its relationship to general health started rather early on in my career, and it continues today.

Biological dentistry is not a separate specialty of dentistry, but a thought process and attitude that can apply to all facets of dental practice and to health care in general: to concentrate first on the causes of oral health problems rather than solely treating their results; then, always seek the safest, least toxic way to accomplish the goals of modern dentistry and of contemporary health care and to recognize the essential connections between oral health and overall health.

My learning odyssey has given me more of an understanding of the intricacy and interconnection of all aspects of the mouth and surrounding areas: that the teeth are only one element of a multi-elemental system wherein all the parts need to work in harmony for continued oral health. As an instance, the oral microbiome (oral bacteria types – over 600 species with their subsets) are unique to each person – and they relate to the entire bodily microbiome that is comprised of 39 trillion microbes. It also gave me an understanding that it is just as important – if not more so – to have a trusting relationship with my patients that is essential for paving the way towards their learning how to become more healthy. The old model in traditional medicine and dentistry of treating symptoms and body parts (implants; crowns; fillings) in isolation is flawed. Body parts and organ systems are connected via the bloodstream, the lymphatic system, the endocrine system, the gastrointestinal system, the nervous system, and the immune system. To say that what happens in one part of the body does not affect the rest is simply irrational.

In keeping with this, our first appointment is not so much about looking for problems and making up a list of things to be done, but begins with a two-way interview wherein I can listen to what my new patient is looking for, discuss any concerns that they may have, and a complete review of their dental and medical histories.

Basic Contrast between a Traditional and Wellness Approach to Dentistry

Traditional Approach

- Looks at teeth and gums as separate components rather than connected elements of a functioning biologic oral system.
- Primarily 'production' oriented.
- Emphasis on treating results rather than discovering causes.
- Treatment services influenced by insurance benefit allowances.

Wellness Approach

- Trained in viewing and treating the mouth as a system within other bodily systems and the connection between oral and systemic health.
- Sees relationship building as the key "building block" to health.
- Discovers, & teaches causes before recommending treatment.
- No 3rd party (insurance) decision influence.
- Understands that the long-term value of services offered outweighs the lower cost of "usual" care.

Through the years, it has become clear to me that people, their mouths and teeth are not alike, and it is this difference that has brought about the mission of the Dental Wellness Center, which is to educate its patients about the unique nature of their oral system to such a degree that they can make informed choices regarding its future.