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City Dental

How to find and recognize a quality dentist

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The media often claims that dentistry in Britain today is falling below international standards. Whatever the statistics discussed, without question poor quality dental care leads to more dental destruction, increased expenses and less chance that you will be able to keep your teeth for life.



Key questions

In setting up guidelines for how you can find high-value dental care for yourself and your family, one of the first questions to ask is: "How do I know when I have found quality care, and what is an acceptable standard?"

As a consumer of health services, you should protect yourself and your family from the risks of under-treatment, over-treatment and poor quality treatment. Surely, it is prudent that before committing yourself to a dentist, you undertake some common sense research and apply certain guidelines when selecting the right dental skills.

What is important to you in dental care?

Use the following as a checklist when looking for a quality dentist...

- The dentistry is of a high clinical standard and is properly explained to you.
- You are treated as a person and not as a 'tooth to be drilled and filled'.
- The dentist is aesthetically/cosmetically oriented.
- The dentist does not rush treatment and will give you his or her full attention.
- You know exactly where you stand as far as practice policy is concerned, for example last minute cancellations and payment terms.

● How do you find a quality dentist?

Ask family and friends

Personal recommendation is very valuable. Remember, however, that people have different perspectives on criteria like quality. Is it enough to judge quality dental care with, "He/she is quick and doesn't hurt me" ?

Get referrals from dental specialists

A dental specialist such as a root-canal treatment specialist (called an endodontist), or a specialist in straightening teeth (an orthodontist), can probably recommend a really good general practitioner. They get referrals from dentists every day, so they know who's who.

Surf the Internet

There are many more dental web sites available now and they offer useful information, such as convenience of location, practice philosophies and range of services provided. Judge the quality of information presented. Ideally, it should feel like you are visiting the actual practice. Look for quality content rather than flashy special effects.

● Once you've found a dental practice, what next?

Become a telephone detective

Before your first appointment, listen to how you are treated by the receptionist. She should ask you detailed questions about yourself, such as "Were you recommended to us? Would you like our practice brochure? Do you have any special problems that we need to take into consideration?"

Check out the front office

Observe your surroundings on the first visit. Does the practice seem professional and comfortable? Can you review the dentist's work (particularly relevant if you are interested in the cosmetic side of dentistry)? Are you handed a comprehensive medical/dental history questionnaire to fill out? Notice how other patients are treated.

In the surgery

Does the dentist find out about your specific needs and concerns and discuss them with you in detail? It's important that the dentist invests time in listening to you and is not just rushing to look inside your mouth. Ask your own questions too. What is his or her philosophy of dental care? Is a treatment plan and quote given for complex work?

After your appointment – evaluate

Ask yourself whether the dentist and the staff fulfill your expectations? Does his or her attitude or personality suit you? Do you feel confident about the prospect of a return visit?

● Finding the right dentist is important

Remember: most people spend more time with their dentist each year than their doctor, so it's important to find the right one. Some may be inadequate and mediocre, but there are plenty of good ones around. Do your own research.

If you know what to look for and how to go about it, you'll find it easy. You'll be rewarded with top quality dental care that saves you time, money and above all ensures that you can keep your teeth for life.

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