

Dental Discounts or a Prudent Approach to Your Treatment

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The current state of our economy dictates a heightened awareness of costs for, and perceived value of everything, including medical & dental services. Open discussion is paramount to receiving the treatment that you need as well as the service that you deserve.

A condition that is discovered ignites the discussion (tooth decay/ jaw pain/ periodontal disease). You're awareness of it either means treatment or not based on how it affects you (sensitivity to eating or drinking/ unable to sleep or headaches/ bad breath, or loose teeth), but what and how much? Informed consent dictates that your provider has a discussion with you about their findings and that alternatives are discussed. This should include a review of your health history, materials, risks/ benefits, time of treatment and cost and an awareness of your long term health goals. A clear understanding of the condition is necessary for you to make an informed decision and arrive at an effective treatment plan.

The current state of your health needs to be considered, are you at a higher risk? The evidence of the oral-systemic connection may reveal how relatively low cost dental treatment may substantially reduce your risks of heart disease, stroke, low weight or pre-term babies and diabetes. Your provider should use educational materials as well as cameras or x-rays to assist in your comprehension; do they take the time to thoroughly explain?

In 2001 the Dental Board of California mandated that all dentists provide to their patients a dental materials fact sheet, to encourage discussion as to what is being placed in your mouth. Have that discussion! It may greatly affect expectations, the short term/ long term benefits, and cost of treatment. As a consumer, knowledge is power. Recently I have read columns that have advocated asking for reduced fees from your health care providers as a way to cut costs, but at what cost to you? Infection control costs, materials and labs cost, attention to detail and personalized care costs. Where would you like to reduce? How much is your time worth? Were you informed of the fees up front? Did you have financial options explained? Do you feel like you received good care? Your health care provider should be your advocate, and a valuable member of your team.

Dr. Goodrick offers free initial consultations. Call 254-4000 or visit www.drdell.com.