

# TOOTHFULLY. *speaking*



**Dr. Preety Desai**

## THE COSTS OF DENTISTRY.

The World Dental Federation (FDI) represents one million dentists worldwide, develops and advocates health policy and continuing education programs. World Oral Health Day (WOHD) was March 20th. It is an international day to celebrate the benefits of a healthy mouth and keeping your teeth for young and old.

Unfortunately, over 90% of the world's population suffers from oral disease and will lose teeth in their lifetime. Think again if you think Canada stands much higher than developing nations. You or someone you know has lost at least one tooth! You would have thought all the school programs funded by government, dental associations and society would have done a better job in Canada. Apparently NOT! And now the clear impact & medical costs that oral health has on physical health is irrefutable.

Obviously prevention is the most cost effective way to prevent disease tooth loss and yet it STILL does not deal with the costs of dental treatment once disease and tooth loss have occurred! More necessary is a dialogue revolving around the financial costs involved in restoring one's mouth to the way it was before tooth loss, cavities, sugar overload, moving and shifting teeth, gum disease, food getting stuck between teeth, bleeding gums and bad breath.

Dental insurance is one way to ease the burden of costs of dental care. Employer supported dental insurance will certainly help lessen the burden but, dental insurance is limited with respect to the allowable treatment and yearly financial limits. Remember, insurance companies provide dental insurance ie a FOR PROFIT corporation which is not a "benefit" as it is colloquially called.

Dental tourism is also a burgeoning business when dental treatment is unaffordable to people. The Canadian snowbird experience is an exceptionally dangerous thing for people wanting dental implants at a cheaper price. Repeating a cliché here is actually not appropriate: "you get what you pay for". In fact you get more pain, infection and costs incurred than what you paid for! It used to be I would see failing implants for Mexico once a year, now I see it monthly and sometimes weekly. Please do not fall prey to the marketing schemes and trendy office decor. The only reason a N American trained dentist flies to another country to work for cheaper prices is not out of the goodness of their heart. If they had passed licensing boards in the USA they would work in the USA - simple! Remember dental implants fail 2-5 years after they were placed.....your lack of warranty is a risky thing!

3d printing technology has finally been introduced into dentistry to reduce costs in the States by over 1/2 and I foresee widespread usage in Canada, what with low cost shipping or even in office printing etc. A recent CBC interview with a kid who printed his braces on his own 3d printer at home and aligned his teeth for pennies. I have also seen the costs of "TEETH IN A DAY" reduced from \$30,000 to \$15,000 with the advent of 3d printing!

But the biggest cost saver in dentistry is to save your teeth. Why even spend the \$30 to 60,000 to replace teeth with implants when the cost of maintaining and cleaning implants is 5X higher than your natural teeth. Technological advances with dental lasers today, saves teeth where we could not in the past but seeing a periodontist who has trained with this technology as opposed to the old school way of cutting and stitching is your responsibility as the consumer - you must educate yourself on this state of the art methodology!

The most important cost savings before you lose teeth or get gum disease or cavities is prevention..... Oral Health Day was all about making you aware! Brush and floss the teeth you want to keep!



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