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RESEARCH ARTICLE

DIY ORTHODONTICS: IS IT DO OR DAMAGE IT YOURSELF!?

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Abstract

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Introduction:-

According to the American Dental Association (ADA), “Teeth are complex living organs comprising many elements. They have nerves and require blood circulation. Moving teeth that are next to other teeth, are rooted in bone, and are held in place by ligaments is often a complicated procedure dependent on multiple individual variables. There really isn’t a “one-size-fits-all” methodology for providing competent, professional orthodontic treatment.”

There is a reason orthodontists study an additional three years after completing dental school and earning their board certification. As the ADA states above, orthodontics involves highly complicated procedures and because no two teeth and jaws are the same, each treatment plan is customized to address the patient’s specific condition. As with many medical procedures, there are also risks involved with orthodontics, so why would anyone take orthodontics into their own hands by using a DIY company?

No Exam Required

One such company offers clear aligner treatment that claims to be dramatically less expensive than if you go the traditional route and see an orthodontist in US. They claim they are able to do this by eliminating the costly, time-consuming parts of the process, such as any in-office meetings with a licensed orthodontist, which means there is no comprehensive exam and no diagnosis given. Instead, their approach is “doctor-directed teledentistry,” in which you make your own dental impressions via a do-it-yourself kit at home, or visit one of their “smile shops” and have a scan taken by an unlicensed employee. You then sign a waiver, affirming you have been approved for orthodontic treatment by your family dentist, and that your teeth, gums, and jaws are healthy enough to withstand orthodontic treatment. If your scans are approved by a “doctor in some remote area” (usually in another country), your aligners will be sent to you via mail. You can communicate with your “doctor” and “dental team” through a customer service platform. Clear aligner treatment supervised by a licensed orthodontist typically lasts between 12 and 24 months, but with this DIY company, your treatment can be done in 5-10 months. So what’s wrong with this picture?

If It’s Too Good To Be True...

Turns out, there’s plenty wrong with this type of orthodontics. Besides the fact that the company has racked up more than 1,200 customer complaints with the Better Business Bureau, as recently as September 2019, a class-action lawsuit was filed against the company on behalf of customers and orthodontists/dentists, and references “thousands of substantiated, serious customer complaints.”

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The biggest issue with DIY orthodontics is the lack of professional experience and supervision throughout treatment. In both dentistry and orthodontics, it is imperative that a comprehensive oral exam is performed in order to fully understand a patient's oral health. Without an exam, how will you know what your risk for injury is? Do you think you can self-diagnose your own condition and treat yourself correctly without a licensed professional physically supervising your treatment, rather than by phone or email?

What happens when a tooth breaks or you experience nerve damage? What happens if your gums start to bleed? What about the personalized, compassionate care most patients appreciate and need? There are so many variables that go into orthodontics – and therefore many things that can go wrong – that trusting your treatment to some “doctor” in a remote island is nothing less than dangerous.

The idea behind DIY orthodontics is to receive inexpensive treatment, get quicker results, and enjoy the convenience of not having to visit an office. But what it really means is that you're choosing a company that is drastically cutting corners with your overall oral health and that personally doesn't care about your well-being. In the long run, that can be costly.

Contact our Orthodontist for Treatment

Orthodontic treatment affects the health of your whole mouth. If you need orthodontic treatment, it is best to choose a licensed orthodontist who has undergone the extra schooling and training to become an orthodontist. Dentists and orthodontists work very closely together to help you achieve your best oral health – and each has its methods to promote oral health. By choosing a licensed orthodontist, who specializes in the alignment of teeth, as well as misalignments, overbites, underbites, and crowded teeth, you are giving yourself the advantage of the experience and expertise you might not otherwise receive from a dentist you will never meet face-to-face. When orthodontic treatment is done incorrectly, it can lead to issues like receding gums, chipping or cracking of the teeth, or even worse, temporomandibular disorder (TMD) and headaches.

It was heartening to read the editorial by Dr. Behrents [1], who states that the U.S. News and World Report has declared that an orthodontist has the best job in the United States. While the situation in India might not be quite similar, it is all the more imperative to educate our patients (not clients) that orthodontists are not merely estheticians but health-care professionals. Orthodontics is not just a science, but also an art. Problems in orthodontics are empirical but unlike medical disease do not strictly follow the Koch's postulates, and this is where the art part kicks in combining knowledge, mechanics, and a keen sense of esthetics

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