



Marketing Myths about Dental Implants

Myth: Any dentist is qualified to surgically place dental implants.

Although it is legal for any licensed dentist to place dental implants, not every dentist placing implants has had extensive training in surgical implant procedures, or experience managing potential complications that can occur.

In the right hands, dental implant treatment is extremely successful. Surgical specialists (oral surgeons and periodontists) have had extensive training and experience with surgical procedures and complications. However, many non-surgical dentists begin placing dental implants after completing an abbreviated training course on implant surgery. These courses do not prepare dentists to predict, diagnose, and treat potential complications.

Since implant placement is a surgical procedure, it is important for patients to ask questions about training and experience prior to undergoing implant surgery.

Myth: Implant “super” centers are the leaders in implant dentistry and they have more experience than other practices.

Certainly some of the doctors involved with “super” centers do have a great deal of experience and truly are leaders in implant dentistry. However, there are hundreds of clinicians in private practice who are also leaders in implant dentistry, publishing articles in scientific journals and lecturing to other clinicians throughout the world. Several of these leaders in the profession have a great deal more experience than most of the doctors in the “super” centers.

“Super” centers often refer to their “collective” experience and volume of implants placed (in multiple centers) throughout their promotional materials. However, volume does not necessarily equate to quality care, expertise, or leadership in the profession. This is a complex surgical and prosthetic treatment that requires extensive training and experience to achieve the best outcome for patients.

Patients should consult their general dentists for recommendations on implant treatment and a referral to an experienced surgical specialist. They should also research their options carefully – and not be swayed by advertising claims. More information can be obtained by visiting www.missingteeth.org.

Myth: All dental implant treatment is the same quality, so it makes sense to shop for the lowest cost available.

This myth couldn’t be further from the truth. Unfortunately, not every dentist who performs implant procedures provides quality dental implant treatment. And many of the dentists promoting “bargain” implant fees are not using quality implants and components, which is frightening considering that this is a medical device being implanted into a human being!

In this economy, cost is often an issue for many people. However, since dental implant treatment involves a surgical procedure and complex prosthetics, the experience of the surgical specialist and the prosthodontist, or restorative dentist, and the quality of the implants and components should be higher priorities than the cost of treatment.

“Bargain” implant treatment presents a multitude of potential problems other than the use of inferior implants and components. Cutting corners to lower the cost often involves rushing through the diagnostic and treatment-planning phase, which rarely produces optimal results. Another compromise that is often made in order to cut costs is using cheap labs that fabricate poor quality and ill-fitting replacement teeth, resulting in functional problems and poor esthetics.

All too often, people who opt for cheap implant treatment end up having treatment again to correct the problems resulting from poor planning, lab issues, and/or substandard implants and components. So, in the long run, it is actually more costly to proceed with cheap implant treatment, as opposed to having it done properly in the first place. Remember, with implant dentistry, you get what you pay for...and if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.



Myth: It is better to go to an implant “super” center for implant treatment where everything is done under one roof.

While it is certainly more convenient to have everything under one roof, it is important to keep in mind that implant treatment involves surgical and complex prosthetic procedures. Therefore, the expertise of the doctors should be a more important consideration than convenience.

If an experienced team of doctors is providing treatment, there are rarely any problems for patients, such as those implied in advertisements and other promotional materials from implant “super” centers.

Patients considering implant treatment should visit www.missingteeth.org for more information regarding selection of an experienced team of doctors.

Myth: Teeth-in-a-Day represents the most advanced technology that is now available for anyone and it is less expensive than traditional implant treatment.

“Teeth-in-a-Day” is a concept that is very appealing to most patients. But this is a bit misleading in that the entire process takes more than one day

Basically, what happens is an initial evaluation with a 3D CAT scan. Virtual planning software is used to plan the entire case on models, including implant placement and the design of the replacement teeth. This technology enables the doctors to place the implants and fabricate and place the replacement teeth the same day – although it is not the same day as the evaluation and diagnostics appointment.

For those patients who qualify, it is a benefit to complete treatment quickly; however, most patients do not qualify for this procedure. The advertising claims implying that traditional methods of implant treatment are outdated, more expensive, take longer

and require more procedures are intended only to “sell” the procedure. The ads are not providing comprehensive education for patients, or explaining that few patients are candidates for teeth-in-a-day, or that there is relatively little scientific data regarding long-term results for this procedure.

Regarding the cost issues, there are other treatment options available to replace dentures that are much more economical. More importantly, many of these traditional treatment options provide a better functional and esthetic result for patients.

Finally, the “teeth-in-a-day” procedure is not provided exclusively by implant “super” centers. If you are interested in this type of treatment, ask your dentist if you could be a candidate, and ask to be referred to a surgical specialist who can provide this procedure.

Myth: Mini implants can be substituted for standard implants and they are noninvasive, permanent and more affordable than other implants.

Advertisements often claim that the procedure for placing mini implants is much simpler than traditional implant procedures and therefore, easier on the patients. In reality, there is less “surgery” involved, but the procedure is not simple.

Mini implants were originally designed to be “transitional” implants to stabilize dentures temporarily while the bone is remodeling around the standard implants that will support the final replacement teeth. In other words, they are intended to provide temporary stabilization. Mini implants are only indicated for certain types of cases. They are not intended to support a final bridge or prosthesis, as they are likely to fracture or fall out over time. Also, since there is relatively little data on the long-term success of mini implants, it is important to consider mini implants primarily for short-term use.

