

What's the difference between your physician and your dentist?

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You open the front door that leads to the waiting room in the office of your physician or dentist. Strewn across end tables and a coffee table are worn copies of People and Time magazines, or perhaps if you're lucky, a National Geographic. You sign in and take a seat in a comfy chair. And that's where the similarity between your physician and dentist ends.

Dentistry is healthcare that works

It is the nature of a dentist's work that has allowed dentists to be successful at improving your oral health and doing it at a bargain. Where medical care has traditionally been mostly "reparative," in that it fixes problems once they've become acute, dental care has traditionally been "preventative," in that it stops problems before they start.



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Since dental disease is highly preventable, only a relatively small percentage of cases are cost-prohibitive. Yet all too often, when medical problems are detected, the costs can run into many thousands of dollars and can even bankrupt the uninsured.

Dental offices are one-stop-shops

The vast majority of dental care is received within the dental office, which is set up as a mini hospital.

Dental surgeries are performed all day by complete surgical teams at efficiencies the medical side could not even imagine.

Further, crowns are made, lab tests are run, X-rays are taken and examined by the dental team. Material costs for filling resins, crown materials, infection control products, anesthetics and a host of other necessary items are considerable, with dental offices experiencing overhead of around 70 percent, the exact opposite of physicians' offices. What's more, a dental patient usually knows his or her costs before electing procedures.

Dentistry stops problems before they start

In a typical medical office, only basic screenings are performed. The medical office exam is often only the beginning of an odyssey that may involve travel to multiple locations involving tests, clinics, hospitals and specialty offices, with each facility or "provider" submitting a separate bill with little regard for the coordination of care, or the total cost incurred by you or your insurance company.

Most dentists are general practitioners

Eighty percent of dentists are general practitioners, and often, only if you choose to live in a rural area, would you find yourself without reasonable access to a dental facility. A single dentist can address the vast majority of dental problems in a community. As a profession, dentists have made many good and deliberate decisions about how to keep our services accessible to those who seek them.

Our commitment to you

While movements are afoot to try and force the square peg of dental care into the round hole that is the medical model, the dental profession remains vigilant in its efforts to preserve our differences that have worked so well for us and our patients. Certainly, some aspects of dental care are evolving with the discovery of new dental and medical health correlations, yet the fundamentals of delivering dental care have not changed. Most of us remain open to new ways to improve efficiency and provide access to dental care, yet we never forget what makes us uniquely different, and how our proud heritage has improved the overall health and quality of life of our patients.



Dental operatory at the Matthew 25 Health and Dental Clinic, Fort Wayne