

# Dentists take a **bite** out of the makeover industry



Story by: Vesna Plazacic

For years plastic surgeons have been cashing in on our vain quests for perfection. Now its Dentists' turn to take a piece of the cosmetic enhancement pie.

Cosmetic surgery isn't just for the rich and famous anymore. With the emergence of television make-over shows such as Fox network's 'The Swan', and ABC's 'Extreme Makeover', cosmetic surgery has become much more affordable, attainable, and acceptable in today's society.

Cosmetic dentistry in particular, has become a booming industry and the international craze has reached us city and county wide. What used to be a regular dental practice, has now, with the help of advertising and new procedures, become a cosmetic dentistry clinic. Dentists all over the city are relentlessly competing with each other to offer their clients the newest and most innovative technology currently on the market. Since there is such a high demand for the newest products, the methods have become a lot more efficient, and in turn, a lot more affordable for those in search of a new smile.

Dr. Robert Shaban, of Windsor's Shaban Dental Clinic says that it isn't new clinics that are popping up all over town, rather that people are just becoming more aware of the new procedures that are out there. "What the media started with those make-over shows, people took over and spread the knowledge through word of mouth advertising". He says that there are many patients coming to see him now, with questions regarding cosmetic dentistry procedures. "What we're able to do now, has greatly improved, due to new materials," says Shaban.

Efficiency alone, has played a huge part in the growing popularity of cosmetic dentistry. Teeth whitening in a general dental office used to take up to 14 days to complete and now, depending on which procedure is undertaken, it can be done in as little as an hour. While these procedures can come with a price tag in excess of \$1,000, people also have the option of whitening their teeth at home with products prescribed from a dentist or even resort to store bought bleaching systems. The results can vary accordingly.

Veneers have also gained in popularity. Originally designed to correct a discolored, worn, chipped, or misaligned tooth, veneers are now being more readily used to enhance a person's entire dental appearance by whitening, filling gaps and evening out teeth alignment. This seemingly quick fix and often an alternative to years of braces, unfortunately does not come with a comparative price range. Patients choosing this type of procedure could be facing a dental bill anywhere from \$700 to \$1,200 - per tooth. Considering a person could have a total of 32 teeth in their mouth, one would have to wonder whether that kind of expense is worth the eventual outcome.

However as we are a culture that demands instant gratification, the manufacturers are catering towards quick remedies when releasing new products onto the market - no matter what the cost may be. A local prosthodontist, Dr. Herman Kupeyan strongly suggests that prospective patients should study their options, as well as prices, and make sure the dentist they choose is certified to perform such procedures. The "majority of the time, these procedures are safe. It all depends on the dentist, and if the patient is in the right hands." And because there is no spe-



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cific certification for administering many of the cosmetic procedures, being in the right hands can simply come down to examining a dentist's portfolio and he or she's additional qualifications in cosmetic dentistry techniques.

While dentistry itself is nothing new there has been changes in the industry and expectations with clients becoming more familiar with the options that are available to them. "People aren't happy with natural looking colors of their teeth anymore," offers Kupeyan. "They want shades that are much more whiter and brighter - they want teeth that are noticeable."

From tooth reshaping to gum-lifts (a process that involves removing extra skin along the gum line to make teeth appear larger and more even), the options are unlimited for people wishing to improve their smile. Local Windsor dentist, Dr. Patrick Strong, of the Strong Denture and Anti-Snoring Clinic attributes this demand and Windsor's wave of new cosmetic dentistry clinics to advertising. "You can't open up a magazine, without seeing people with bright, beautiful smiles. People are starting to take care of their teeth, because they're aware of these new procedures," says Strong.

The multi-billion dollar advertising industry depends on people with poor self-images and, in this case, a large disposable income to invest in these latest trends - and dentists are smiling all the way to the bank. The appeal of reality make-over shows is just that - reality. It's easy to relate to regular people with normal jobs and families, and of course, personal physical flaws. The targeted audience is hooked on believing that if the average Joe with three kids and a mediocre job can do it, then it's possible for them as well. The attainability and ease of these cosmetic proce-

dures has further added to its demand.

However, due to the fact that almost all of the procedures are not covered by private or public health benefits, money can remain an obstacle. Enter Credit Medical Corporation (CMC), a Toronto-based company that specializes in providing financial aid to people seeking a number of medical and dental procedures. It's monthly payment plans enable patients to achieve that perfect look without breaking the bank in doing so.

The overall benefits of choosing cosmetic dentistry are obvious; improving the appearance of less than perfect teeth helps a person gain confidence in both their personal and professional life. Ingrained in North American culture is the constant desire to improve oneself physically for personal gain and happiness. Yet according to the Government of Ontario, it is not just young people who are desiring a new look and improved self-esteem that are fueling the growth and popularity of this industry. The ageing population are also jumping on the cosmetic dentistry bandwagon and increasing the demand for restorative dental work.

Whatever the reason for using these services, everybody stands to gain; the dentists are reaping the rewards with cosmetic and esthetic procedures becoming the highest growth areas in today's market; clients are improving their dental appearance and functionality; and, financial institutions are benefiting from those people that want to have the procedures before they can afford to pay for them in their entirety.

While the financial sacrifice may be considerable, society's obsession with physical perfection far outweighs the costs associated with such procedures. And for some, that Hollywood smile could now be only a pay cheque...or two away. N



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