
Opening Your Mind and Embracing the Options

by **Mark E. Hyman, DDS, MAGD**

In the 26 years that I have practiced cosmetic and family dentistry in Greensboro, N.C., I have been introduced to literally hundreds of technological advances in our field. Over the years, my team and I have responded to most with an open mind. When positive outcomes have ensued after further research and clinical implementation, I have integrated the majority of these innovations into my practice. The Snap-On Smile was one that, initially, I was not sure would be a viable option for my patients. However, the excellent results weâ€™ve achieved completely altered my first perception of this relatively new cosmetic appliance. Now that the next evolution is available â€” the Snap-On Smile Advanced â€” Iâ€™m looking forward to recommending this new and improved option for more demanding cases, including edentulous spans with two abutments (greater than 22 mm and less than 40 mm), correcting severe buccal and lingual inclinations, severe malocclusion (cross-bite), some Class III cases, and those cases involving up to three embedded implants.

Most commonly, Iâ€™ve found Snap-On Smile to be the perfect solution for those patients who, after a comprehensive case evaluation, are identified as good candidates for a provisional means of improving their smile. It may be their best option due to their age â€” either their teeth are still growing or, if older patients, they may not be interested in extensive dental work. For other patients, it may be the expedience, affordability, or ease of application that make Snap-On Smile the appropriate solution for their life situation.

As one of the first dentists in North Carolina to use the CEREC system for dental restorations, I have hundreds of examples of patients whose expectations for their dream smiles were exceeded by the work we completed for them. Patientsâ€™ reasons for wishing to improve their appearance are as individual as they are, and during my personal consultation with each new patient, I strive to determine the best course of treatment based upon their stated objectives.

For many of my patients, the decision to choose porcelain crowns, bridges, or veneers involves a

significant investment that they completely accept and plan for. Some find it beneficial to consider financing their treatment through a program such as CareCredit, which we strongly endorse. However, some patients find that the cost of their dream smile is simply beyond their reality, and until recently, we did not believe we had a viable option to share with them.



I readily admit that when I was introduced to Snap-On Smile, I was skeptical about its viability for my patients. I performed my usual due diligence and reviewed the benefits outlined in the marketing materials, which state, "non-invasive, esthetic, easy, removable, multi-purpose appliance." But could I make the leap from recommending a treatment plan that could take up to a year and cost close to \$50,000, to offering a much more affordable and simple-to-fit and apply option?

As it turns out, I was able to take that leap, and for the patients who accepted this treatment plan, it was absolutely the best option for them in their individual situations. When the level of care that a patient needs is not available to them, it's important to always consider appropriate alternative treatment plans. In other words, meeting a patient's needs sometimes requires flexibility and a willingness to step out of our established protocols and personal comfort zone.



When the retired psychology professor, who had been my patient for many years and was facing some unanticipated financial challenges, came to see me about his broken front bridge, he was frustrated and unsure of his options. It seemed like the last straw for him, and we wanted to find a way to help him. Given his age and financial issues, Snap-On Smile was absolutely the best choice for him, and we guaranteed that he would be pleased with the results. He was ecstatic with his new smile and extremely grateful that we took the time to explain the benefits of this option to him.

After this case, a completely different set of circumstances prompted me to suggest this option to another patient. It's probably not surprising that a hockey coach and former NHL player would need cosmetic dentistry at some point in his life. Serious damage to the teeth is practically a rite of passage for these athletes. The level of dental treatment they receive is often minimal or, at best, inconsistent. When our new patient showed us his bottom teeth that had been "busted out," and described his difficulties finding a comfortable and affordable way to fill the gap, the solution was much more readily apparent. Our patient had a very limited budget with all the financial obligations of

parenthood in a single income family. While he was proud of his professional sports career, he knew that the parents of the players he coached saw the risks of the sport every time he smiled. After talking with him and learning how self-conscious he was about his smile, we determined that the Snap-On Smile was his best treatment option. He agreed, and his wife told us the confidence heâ€™s gained with his new smile has improved the lives of his family and changed him in many positive ways.

At this point, we have many patients with similar success stories. Their situations are all quite different, and admittedly, I have related two of the more extreme cases. But the point remains and bears repeating â€” sometimes we need to step back from our established protocols and long-held biases and reconsider the benefits of new options. If a patient is in transition in his or her life, giving the person a nontraditional solution can be a much better option than having someone completely forgo treatment. Until we do so, we canâ€™t truly claim to be offering our patients the full range of care they deserve, and in todayâ€™s world, rightfully demand.

As a final note, Snap-On Smile can serve as an excellent provisional in many traditional restorative cases. Patients very much appreciate the option of an attractive and functional smile over the course of treatment.

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