



Managing our Guest **Total Health**

Joseph M. Barton, DMD, LVIM

As part of the Total Health Panel, I briefly spoke on the implementation of addressing total health in our practice. We as dentists have a unique opportunity to become more involved in our guests management of their overall health due to the frequency with which we see our guests. We ask and update medical histories as well as document medication intake on a regular basis, and we are one of the most respected health care professionals in today's medicine. The relationship and trust we have formed with our guests grants us the opportunity to begin an open dialogue regarding management of their overall health.

After practicing for 26 years and dedicating my practice to restorative and aesthetics, I wanted to provide more for my guests. The practice transition that followed after my training in Neuromuscular Sleep Dentistry at LVI was a natural progression to addressing our guests' total health.

As part of our rebranding, we took into consideration what is most important to how we serve our guests. As we moved from aesthetics and restorative to addressing neuromuscular occlusion, my team and I began to identify how many over medicated, unhealthy guests we had in our practice. We also observed that our guests were eager for someone to help them manage their overall health. We realized that no one was focusing on why many patients in the medical system were not getting well but instead were increasing the number of pills they consumed.

As I stated, we started with rebranding to help represent our mission statement with the practice name:

ADMIRA standing for 'The Admiration we have for our guest's dedication to their health'. Our focus no longer is just aesthetics but instead on beauty, total health, and finding balance in our lives between work, health, family, and spirituality.

Sounds good in theory but implementation and follow up is the key to this role in our guests' health. Here are a few things that we have found to help with the process.

1. Expanding the generic health history form that most dental software programs provide is the start to collecting a very thorough medical history. We use a twelve-page health questionnaire that covers medical, TMD, and sleep categories. Sending this form to guests ahead of time sets the precedence for the medical aspect we focus on in our practice and not just dental. Using this tool to update the medical history of our current guests provide the opportunity to discuss concerns with existing guests in areas we may not have been asking previously.
2. Collecting the list of health care providers currently or previously seen serves two purposes.
 - We started to assemble a data bank of specialists and general practitioners in our area along with functional, integrative, and alternative practitioners. We highlighted the ones that our guests embrace as a positive advocate for obtaining health not just dispensing medications.
 - We began to develop a team of practitioners to whom we can refer our guests. We also began to develop a team of clinicians that could refer their patients to us to be a part of a wellness team.

3. Form collection prior to our guest-scheduled appointment is ideal so the medical history and medications can be reviewed prior to the intake interview. We start each guests visit, whether a consult or comprehensive exam, with a review of their complete health history form. This allows us to deepen concerns regarding illnesses, medication intake, and symptoms.
4. We realize that not all of our guests want us to take an active role in managing their overall health. We ask each guest's permission to address concerns we see in their health history as well as their family. Occasionally, we have come up against opposition to discussing anything outside of dentistry with our guests; however, our entire team has worked very diligently on verbal skills to communicate the connection between teeth, gums, temporomandibular joints, airway and the body's ability to remain healthy.

Implementation of this total health concept in our practice has had many rewards. We have been instrumental in identifying early signs of cardiac disease, diabetes, sleep apnea and cancer. We have also been instrumental in reversing tendencies toward obesity, high cholesterol, and temporomandibular disorders. We have assembled a team of health care practitioners in all areas of medicine including nutritionists, wellness coordinators, acupuncturists, neuromuscular therapists and allergy elimination specialists.



For me, I believe if our guests value overall health, then our job is that much easier. So we lead by example and share with our guests what it takes to be healthy. The mouth is the pathway to health and provides a window into their level of health. As dental and healthcare providers we can set the standard in our community in terms of our guests healthcare management and total well-being. We have the unique opportunity and privilege to guide our guests through the process of obtaining Beauty-Health-Balance.

