
ORTHODONTICS: CHOOSE WISELY!

For parents embarking upon orthodontic treatment to advance the health and facial appearance of their children, there is much concern among the world's scientific community over the lack of science in current clinical practise.^{29,30,31,32}

Conventional orthodontic treatment is unable to replicate the straight teeth that develop naturally when the mouth is closed and the tongue is resting in the roof of the mouth. According to orthodontist Dr John Flutter, "the best aligned teeth I see are people who never had orthodontic treatment."⁵

Traditional orthodontics recognises the cause of crooked teeth as a result of teeth being too large for the jaws. The approach is to wait until the child is twelve years of age or older before treatment begins. Normally, two to four teeth are extracted to make room for existing teeth, which are then aligned with braces.

UK-based Channel Four programme called *Dispatches* that aired during December 1999, queried whether the standard orthodontic treatment of extractions to make room for teeth actually damages a child's face.^{33,34} The programme showed that parents who bring their children with crooked teeth to an orthodontist are not told that the treatment could cause serious damage.

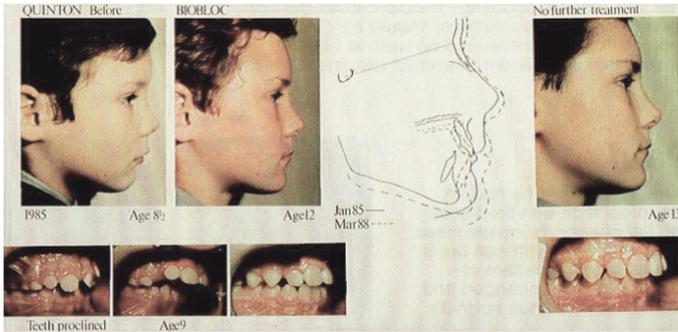
During the programme, 700 UK families were interviewed. More than half of the children undergoing treatment had teeth extracted. A comparison was made with treatment in California, where extractions take place in only 15% of cases.^{33,34} There, many orthodontists apply expandable braces to gently widen the jaws to make room for the teeth. In addition, children are taught exercises, including correct swallowing and nasal breathing, as part of their treatment.

In an interview with the British newspaper *The Independent*, Dr Mew is quoted as follows: “I frequently see examples of faces which have been really badly spoiled. In my personal opinion, probably about 20 per cent of orthodontic patients are noticeably damaged and maybe another 30 per cent are slightly damaged.”³⁴

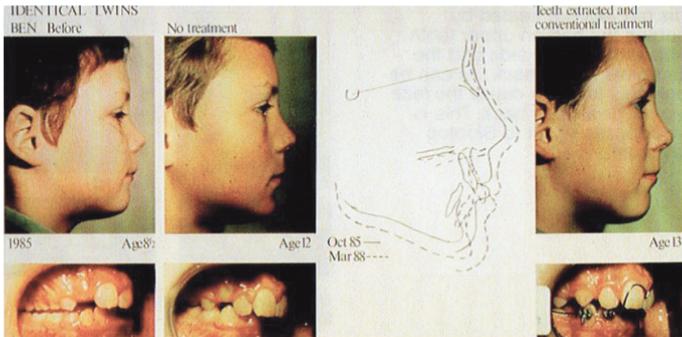
The article further adds that extraction of teeth can result in “long-term damage to the skull, jaw pain and headaches as a result of orthodontic dentistry. In the worst cases, they suffer ringing in the ears, postural problems leading to muscle pain in the neck, shoulders and back, and extreme headaches.”³

The best advice if you are considering orthodontic treatment for your child is to ask your orthodontist whether there will be room for all 32 teeth and also check that the vertical growth of the child’s face will not be increased. If you don’t receive such an assurance, you might be wise to ask for a second opinion.

IDENTICAL TWINS



Photos courtesy of Dr John Mew



One case that Dr Mew puts forward to support his claims is the case history of identical twin brothers Quinton and Ben Creed who are pictured above. Quinton, the more serious case, was treated by Dr Mew using orthotropics which involved no extractions or braces. He reshaped Quinton jaw with appliances to make room for the overcrowded teeth. His twin brother Ben opted for traditional orthodontics, resulting in the

extraction of four teeth and fixed braces.

A number of years later, Ben is quoted as saying “Because of the extractions, the width of my mouth is smaller. In hindsight, I would have preferred to have gone with Dr Mew’s method as it got much better results.”³⁴

“I’ve got a longer face, a smaller smile, less pronounced features and just generally more of a flatter face.” When Ben was asked if this was the result of his braces and extractions, he replied; “yes, it’s probably due to the extractions and the braces that I had.”¹⁶

Ever since the 1960s, Dr Mew’s treatment is based on “aiming to encourage horizontal growth of the facial bones by means of good muscle tone and a tongue-to-palate resting posture with the mouth closed, in the belief that, in these circumstances, the teeth will align themselves. This is in contrast to the mechanical approach of most orthodontists, which innumerable papers have shown tends to increase vertical growth.”³⁵

In a paper by Dr Mew published in the *World Journal of Orthodontics*, a study compared the effect of traditional fixed appliances and orthotropic (growth guidance) treatment without fixed appliances on a series of identical twins ten years after treatment. A panel of 12 lay judges assessed the facial changes. “The results showed that most of the traditionally treated twins were judged to look less attractive after treatment, while most

treated by Orthotropics were judged to have improved. There was little difference in the dental results, but the traditionally treated cases seemed to relapse more frequently.”³⁶

SIXTY MINUTES TV INTERVIEW

Australian TV programme Sixty Minutes interviewed a number of orthodontists on this subject. The interviewer was Peter Overton. Dr Geoff Wexler was spokesman for the Australian Society of Orthodontists. The following is part of the transcript.¹⁶

PETER OVERTON: Well, how about this example. Nineteen-year-old Michael Buggy went to six Sydney orthodontists for his condition, some minor crowding. All insisted he lose four teeth. But his mother Valerie wasn't so sure.

VALERIE BUGGY: And I was horrified, because I didn't think that he had such a big problem and I begged them not to take them out. I said, "Isn't there, in all the knowledge that you have and all the studying that you've done, isn't there another way?" But they were quite steadfast that no, the teeth have got to come out or the problem would come back.

PETER OVERTON: Finally Valerie gave in and took Michael to the dentist for the extractions.

VALERIE BUGGY: He was just at the point of having them out, she had all the tools in her hand and she said, "You don't want this to happen, do you?" And I said, "No, I don't, but what else can I do?" And as luck would have it she gave me this dentist's card and said, "Give

him a ring.”

PETER OVERTON: That card belonged to Derek Mahony and he straightened Michael’s teeth without extractions.

VALERIE BUGGY: I would like to actually show these orthodontists that said to me, “You’ll be back, you’ll be sorry.” I’d like to show them his smile now and I just wish that orthodontists would get together and give any mother like me the opportunity not to have the teeth taken out.

PETER OVERTON: Can I show you this patient here? Do you think he needs extractions?

DR GEOFF WEXLER: Well, I wouldn’t.

PETER OVERTON: You wouldn’t?

DR GEOFF WEXLER: No.

PETER OVERTON: Six eminent orthodontists recommended to this patient’s mother that he needed to have the classic four on the floor.

DR GEOFF WEXLER: What you’ve presented me here is part of the information. Based on what you’ve shown me I wouldn’t, but there might be other factors that you haven’t shown me in this patient’s diagnosis.

PETER OVERTON: He’s had very successful treatment with Derek Mahony without extractions. Does that surprise you?

DR GEOFF WEXLER: No.

PETER OVERTON: Are faces being damaged by traditional extraction-type orthodontics?

DR GEOFF WEXLER: I haven't seen any evidence at all to say that faces are being damaged in general.

PETER OVERTON: Try telling that to dentist Dr Mike Fennel. He pulled out four of his son's teeth on the advice of an orthodontist. The result? David's face ended up looking like this.

DR MIKE FENNEL: It ruined the look of his mouth. So from the nose upwards he looked great, but from the nose downwards he just looked terrible, but how do you tell that to your son? In fact, he looked like an old man. At the age of 18 he looked like an old man with no teeth in.

PETER OVERTON: Is "damaged" the right word?

DR MIKE FENNEL: Yes, it is really.

PETER OVERTON: Traditional orthodontics did that to his face?

DR MIKE FENNEL: They did, yes. Yes.