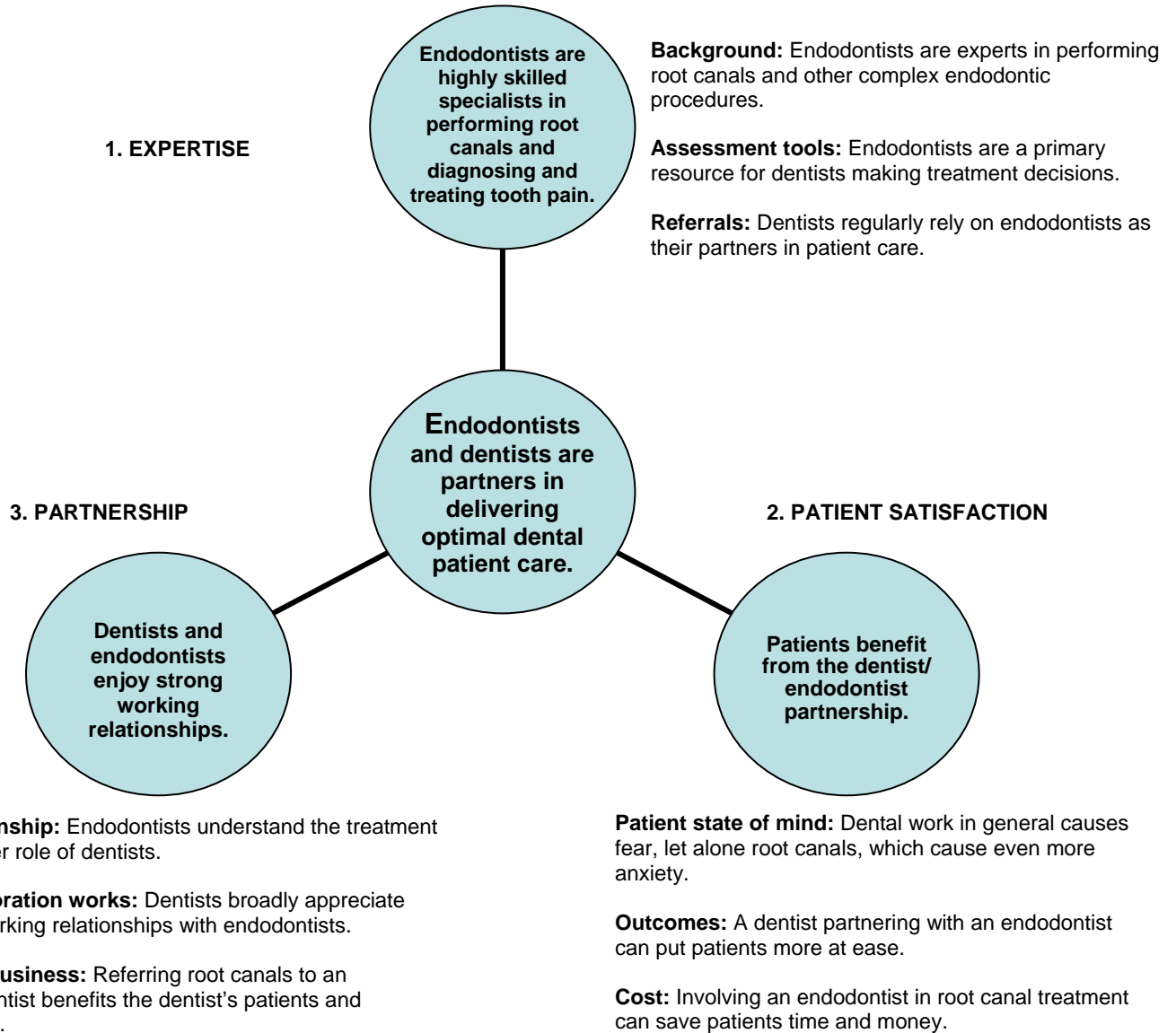


# Endodontists: Partners in Patient Care



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## CORE MESSAGE

**Endodontists and dentists are partners in delivering optimal dental patient care.**

## SUPPORTING MESSAGES

### 1. **EXPERTISE: Endodontists are highly skilled specialists in performing root canals and diagnosing and treating tooth pain.**

**Background:** Endodontists are experts in performing root canals and other complex endodontic procedures. They:

- Deliver the best outcomes with the highest rates of tooth survival.
  - Are focused on saving natural teeth as a priority.
- Perform root canals almost exclusively (95% of what they do).
  - Perform about 25 root canal treatments a week vs. fewer than two for dentists.
- Are experts who diagnose, treat and relieve oral and facial pain.
  - Are pain management experts (e.g. specialized training in administering anesthesia).
  - Are trained in and use leading technology (e.g. operating microscopes, rotary instrumentation, surgical binoculars, digital radiography, Cone Beam CT).
  - Use microsurgical techniques to improve patient comfort and save natural teeth.
- Complete two to three years of advanced training beyond dental school.

**Assessment:** Endodontists are a primary resource for dentists making treatment decisions.

- Endodontists are available on a consultative basis or when dentists simply need a second opinion.
- AAE's Endodontic Case Difficulty Assessment Form helps a dentist determine when to refer patients to endodontists. Based on clinical analysis, it assigns a level of difficulty to each individual case:
  - **Minimal difficulty:** routine complexity with predictable outcome
  - **Moderate difficulty:** preoperative condition is complicated; predictable outcome is challenging
  - **High difficulty:** preoperative condition is exceptionally complicated; predictable outcome is challenging for even the most experienced practitioner
- AAE's Treatment Options for the Compromised Tooth Decision Guide helps a dentist determine treatment options for a compromised tooth, including identifying circumstances when implants may be an acceptable choice.

**Referrals:** Dentists regularly rely on endodontists as their partners in patient care.

- In a typical year, 98% of general dentists refer at least one patient who needs a root canal to an endodontist. [*GP Referral Study, December 2009*]
- Dentists, on average, refer half of their patients [46%] who need root canals to endodontists each year. [*GP Referral Study, December 2009*]
- One-fourth of dentists refer 90% or more of their root canals. [*GP Referral Study, December 2009*]
- One-third of dentists acknowledge they've performed root canals that should have been referred to an endodontist. [*GP Referral Study, December 2009*]

# Endodontists: Partners in Patient Care

## 2. PATIENT SATISFACTION: Patients benefit from the dentist/endodontist partnership.

**Patient state of mind:** Dental work in general causes fear, let alone root canals, which cause even more anxiety.

- 80% of American adults already fear the dentist. [2008 Omnibus Survey]
- Pain is the top reason adults avoid the dentist, and root canal treatment is the most feared dental procedure. [2008 Omnibus Survey]
- Adults are more afraid of getting a root canal (54%) than of speaking in public or interviewing for a job (both 42%). [2008 Omnibus Survey]

**Outcomes:** A dentist partnering with an endodontist can put patients more at ease.

- 89% of patients are satisfied after a root canal by an endodontist. [National Consumer Awareness Survey, May 2007]
- Patients who have a root canal treatment performed by endodontists are more satisfied than those who have the procedure performed by general dentists. [National Consumer Awareness Survey, 2008]
- 96% of dental educators who have been treated by an endodontist have had a positive or very positive experience. [Survey of Dental Educators and Students, December 2008]

**Cost:** Involving an endodontist in root canal treatment can save patients time and money.

- Endodontists have the expertise to do everything from the most common to most complex root canals, diminishing the need for retreatment.
- While some complex treatments certainly require more than one visit, most root canals can be completed by endodontists in a single appointment.
- Root canals performed by endodontists provide patients with a solid foundation for crowns and other restorative work, reducing the likelihood of future complications and costs.
- By saving the natural teeth through root canal treatment, endodontists save patients the expense associated with losing teeth, which causes multiple problems over the long term and costs much more. (e.g. shifting teeth, follow-up visits to place and maintain prosthetics, etc.)
- A comparison of endodontic treatments performed by general dentists or by endodontists showed that endodontic treatment was significantly more successful when performed by a specialist based on a comparison of survival of teeth following endodontic treatment. [Oral Surg Oral Med Oral Pathol Oral Radiol Endod. 2004 Jul;98(1):115-8; Alabama study]

# Endodontists: Partners in Patient Care

## 3. PARTNERSHIP: Dentists and endodontists enjoy strong working relationships.

**Relationship:** Endodontists understand the treatment manager role of dentists...and are respectful of requests to: (% from 2009 GP Referral Study where dentists said best partners do X)

- Provide timely reports and film. [94%]
- Refer patient back for restorative treatment, patient accommodation. [94%]
- Treat emergencies and patients in pain immediately. [92%]
- Be available for second opinions. [90%]
- Collaborate on treatment plan for referred patients. [86%]
  - Share dentist's treatment philosophy.
  - Support treatment plan put in place by dentist.
  - Confer with dentist before suggesting alternatives to patient.
- Explain office policies/procedures, availability, fees, technology used
- Accommodate patients in scheduling.
- Show calming, caring "chairside" manner.
- Get familiar with the case in advance.

**Collaboration works:** Dentists broadly appreciate their working relationships with endodontists.

- 94% of dentists have a positive or very positive perception of endodontists and the care they provide. [*GP Referral Study*, December 2009]
- Dentists commonly refer to endodontists as an essential part of the dental health team, playing a critical role in the delivery of quality dental care.
  - Establishing a relationship with an endodontist means having a specialist who can serve as a consultant and a resource for a dental practice.
  - The dentist/endodontist partnership allows many dentists to focus on the core part of their practice they enjoy most.

**Good business:** Referring root canals to an endodontist benefits the dentist's patients and practice.

- Patients are more likely to be satisfied with a root canal performed by an endodontist.
  - 89% of patients are satisfied after a root canal by an endodontist. [*National Consumer Awareness Survey*, May 2007; see also "patient satisfaction"]
  - Patients who have a root canal treatment performed by endodontists are more satisfied than those who have the procedure performed by general dentists. [*National Consumer Awareness Survey*, 2008; see also "patient satisfaction"]
- Patient satisfaction provides a distinct cost benefit to dentists who refer root canals.
  - Patients appreciate knowing a dentist has partners who specialize in more complex procedures (e.g. endodontics, orthodontics, oral surgery).
  - Happy patients are more loyal to their dentist, which results in stronger referrals and a steadier stream of repeat visits. (Research consistently proves this intuitive truth about consumers and the services they continue to choose and refer.)
- The cost can be greater for a dentist to do a root canal than refer.
  - 87% of dentists say work performed by endodontists is worth the cost. [*GP Referrals Study*, December 2009]
  - The time it takes a dentist to treat/re-treat and have dental assistants support root canal care can significantly diminish the value of doing those procedures.
  - Complications due to endodontic procedures are the second most common source of malpractice complaint against dentists. [Case studies: Experts.com, Crystal Baxter DMD,MDS, 2007 (Extractions #1); JADA, October 2006/by James Hurley, Tillinghast/Towers Perrin (Prosthodontics #1)]