

David Remnick, Editor
The New Yorker
1 World Trade Center
New York, NY 10007

June 14, 2023

Dear David,

As the President of the American Association of Endodontists, household subscriber to *The New Yorker*, and regular listener to *The New Yorker Radio Hour*, I was a little dismayed to see “root canal” included on your cover of the June 19th issue entitled “Fireworks Megastore” among maladies in life such as, “sense of doom”, “crushing student debt”, “shattered dreams” and so many more.

Please don’t think that endodontists have no sense of humor, but we spend much time and effort creating public awareness of the fact that root canal treatments are a solution – not a problem. Not only do they save your teeth from extraction; they also relieve the pain caused by toothache and infection. And while it’s true that no one necessarily wants to be in a situation where they *need* a root canal, the procedure itself helps millions find relief each year. My patients often tell me after treatment that they don’t understand what all the fuss was about. We have come a long way since your grandmother’s, or even your mother’s, root canal.

We certainly cannot anticipate the news cycle, but isn’t it ironic that the release of this issue coincided with the announcement that President Joe Biden had undergone an emergency root canal procedure? I can imagine that he appreciated being relieved of the pain that distracted him from performing his job. While none of us (including the President) can solve all the issues presented in the Fireworks Megastore (our association *is* advocating for student debt relief, however!), we feel strongly that today’s root canal deserves a positive image that is consistent with its role in maintaining oral and systemic health.

I have long been fan of Roz Chast and wish I were as artistically gifted. If given the opportunity to tweak to her cover, I would substitute the label “raging toothache” on the can labeled “root canal”. We endodontists, as experts in saving teeth and relieving pain, are ready to put the myth of the painful root canal procedure to rest.

Sincerely,



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