

## The Origin of the Dental Wellness Center



This article will offer information about the inception and development of The Dental Wellness Center and its founder, Dr. Robert McBride.

It didn't take Dr. McBride long after dental school graduation and starting in dental practice to realize that something was missing. He had considered dentistry to be a helping, health profession, but at his first job working with a senior dentist, he was continually chided to do more dental treatment in less time, so as to "increase production." Having graduated with honors based upon the quality of his work in dental school, he felt trapped in that if he had to work faster, the quality of his care would definitely suffer. This became very conflicting for him, wanting to treat all his patients with the quality of care he would perform for his family and close friends – and he would never think of shorting the time necessary to do his best for them. This felt to him to be irresponsible, along with other inconsistencies that were going against his grain. (or "looming ahead.")

He signed on with dental insurance\* company contracts because it "was the thing to do," in that his senior dentist and all dentists in the area were contracted with them as well. Essentially, the contract is a marketing bargain between the dentist and insurance company wherein the dentist receives patients from the company's list of insured's, in exchange for their regulating treatment allowances for least expensive "patchwork" repairs, along with the dentist's fees, influenced by zip codes as well. It wasn't long after being in this third party relationship that he experienced many other contradictions. Insured patients were being conditioned to only want incomplete treatment based upon their limited yearly benefit allowance, which flew in the face of the quality of care that he envisioned for his patients - it seemed that being an "insurance dentist" allowed patients to direct their own treatment, which for most was far from complete care.

Another disparity looming was that the only insurance benefits for prevention are "cleanings" and "deep cleanings," not for the time it takes to adequately coach a patient how to perform effective daily self-care. At that time, before he could afford the services of a dental hygienist, Dr. McBride cleaned his patients' teeth. He was noticing that those patients who were interested in their health and were preventively coached, had less decay and gum disease, and had healthier check-ups than those who just wanted their teeth cleaned. He was feeling pressured, as coaching patients and performing a proper teeth cleaning took more time than the

usual allotted time for a cleaning alone, and not being consistent with office policy. Essentially, teeth cleanings are removing material from teeth, most all of which could be removed by an interested patient – if properly coached. He was also learning of the relationship between oral and general health; that the health of the mouth can both affect and be affected by that of the body – a reciprocal relationship.

All of these inconsistencies, along with what he was learning about the mouth's relationship to physical health prompted Dr. McBride to take a big leap – move out of that office and at the same time terminate his insurance company contracts. This was a large financial risk with no more influx of insurance patients, and a new office and staff. While at the same time seeing his colleagues prosper, he was juggling things to keep afloat during this transition - in essence, it was “do or die.”

The early days of having gone against the prevailing grain with fewer interested patients have paid off, as through the years The Dental Wellness Center has grown into a viable entity with the oral assessment, preventive and treatment tools available for any interested patient to become healthier both orally and systemically, with a more functional and attractive smile. The Center was built on the premise that the development of good relationships fosters the trust necessary for the development of health. That health cannot be “installed” by the best of dental repairs and replacements and cosmetic care without the development of a healthy oral system. It starts out with a learning experience between doctor and patient, during which time mutual responsibilities are assigned relative to the individual prevention and treatment needs and desires that suit an informed patient.