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Teeth cleanings without the dentist

(Posted Date: Thursday, September 18, 2008)

By [Kelly Gadzala](#)

He's never had a cavity, but that hasn't prevented Allan Levine from getting his teeth cleaned.

Still, the 30-year Yonge and Eglinton resident says he's only ever spent a few minutes with his dentist while the rest of his dental checkup is spent with a hygienist.

"I have yet to understand why I see a dentist," Levine says.

Levine recently tried out a teeth cleaning at the new flagship location of Independent Dental Hygiene Centres on Yonge St. at Eglinton Ave., which was performed by one of the centre's dental hygienists.

As of September 2007, dental hygienists in Ontario can practice without being supervised by a dentist. They are qualified to perform procedures like teeth cleaning, polishing and whitening but cannot fill cavities or diagnose dental conditions.

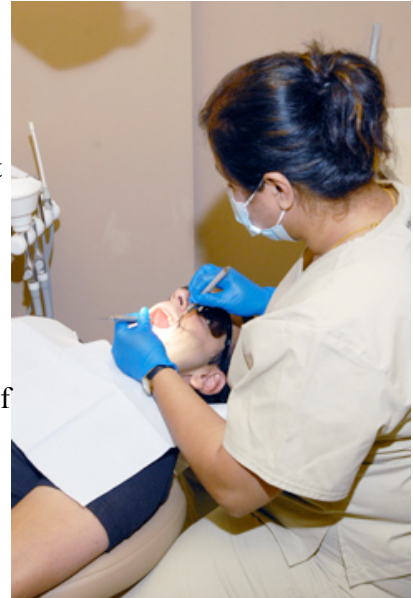
"The hygienists were theoretically and practically practicing without the dentists anyway," says co-founder Brian Price. "All our company is doing is enabling hygienists to be independent."

Price says when the change was made, he called former business partner Howard Rocket and asked him to come out of retirement. Both dentists turned entrepreneurs, Price and Rocket founded the Tridont Dental Centres in the 1980s, which had 107 locations across Canada mainly in malls.

This new venture, Price says, will build on the accessibility and conveniences of the former business model, but will offer lower prices.

The centre is open evenings and weekends for a total of 70 hours a week, Price says. Subsequent centres will be built along the subways lines — six along Yonge and the remaining five along the Bloor line, he adds.

Hygienists like working in the new-style clinic as it allows them to spend more time educating their patients about how to take care of their teeth.



OPEN WIDE: Dental hygienist Amina Zaidi checks out the chompers of patient Allan Levine before his cleaning. Unlike other clinics, Levine won't be seeing a dentist at this clinic.

“So far I feel I can practice dental hygiene the way it was meant to be practiced,” says Amina Zaidi, senior hygienist with the centre.

She has been in the dental field since 1995, including six years as a hygienist in a private practice.

“We’re not bound by a tight schedule or a production mentality,” she says, adding that, though not discussed openly, some dentist offices have quotas per hour.

Levine, who is without dental insurance, says he was attracted to the concept primarily because of the cost. But at his appointment, he says he appreciated the relaxed environment and the fact that he could watch a computer screen mounted on the wall that showed what the hygienist was doing.

He also left with specific instructions about which teeth he needs to floss better instead of just a general reminder to do it, he says.

“It’s rare you go do something like this and actually remember it.”

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