

Extreme Makover on TV

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I just could not resist making some comments on the "Extreme Makeover" phenomenon since it has been getting so much press and it has definitely effected dentistry. Once or twice a week, you see some fairly ugly people transformed into really good looking personas and one of the hallmarks of that transformation is the dental work which usually includes 16 da Vinci Veneers and ZOOM whitening, and occasionally dental implants and other types of dental surgery. It looks great on television and it is truly impressive to the public to see such a transformation take place in just one hour's time. However, there are a great number of problems associated with these treatments and the long term results that we see.

First of all, as to the DaVinci veneers, these are porcelain veneer restorations that are constructed by a specific dental lab in California. The da Vinci lab did not invent the porcelain veneer and they have no real exclusivity over it. People like myself have been doing porcelain veneer restorations for almost 30 years now. It is a particularly easy procedure for both the patient and the dentist and the results are usually very good. I have a little explanation of bonding and porcelain veneers on my web site, and if you want to see the whole story on cosmetic dentistry, I have a section for that as well. I think that the dentist depicted on the TV show try's to fit all his patients into the same basic treatment modality. It is hard to judge the quality of the work on the TV screen but my overall impression was there was too much emphasis on "white teeth" and not enough on the overall health of the dentition. That said, again it is TV and what we are seeing is a few minutes of what amounts to hours of work in the dental chair.

ZOOM Whitening is one of many available whitening procedures. They all work to a certain degree and they all actually bleach your teeth. I have very yellow teeth and once in a while, I get them whitened, but I still smoke my cigars. These techniques do not usually cause any problems for the patients and most of the procedures are carried out by the dental assistants in the office.

Dentistry has 9 recognized specialty areas. There is no specialty of Cosmetic Dentistry or Dental Implantology for that matter. One of my pet peeves is the dentist who advertises that he or she is a specialist in cosmetic dentistry. It takes a lot of training and experience to be able to restore a person's dentition to a naturally looking, beautiful smile. Not many practitioners can actually achieve those special results, and from what I have seen so far, the dentist on Extreme Makeover who holds himself out to be a cosmetic specialist does not fill the bill. You might want to look at baddentist.com to see what can happen when things really go wrong. Prosthodontics is the one area of dental specialization which concentrates on the resources available to produce the most cosmetic dental results and I would like to think that most Prosthodontists do a respectable job in this area of dentistry.

The key for what is done on extreme makeover is that it is all done quickly... Veneers and bleaching lend themselves to this. Periodontal surgery, oral reconstruction, most dental implant procedures are all long term projects and you wont see too much of that on extreme makeover. Most of my practice involves the long term stuff and that is pretty much what I like to do. I have found that if you take your time reconstructing a smile, the results will definitely last a long time. Many of us in the profession question how long these "extreme makeover" smiles will last. SRD