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English 101, College Writing 1, Section NO

20 May 2020

A Mean and Difficult Patient

About twenty years ago, a new patient called to make an appointment, stating she wanted to make a full denture, but she needed to remove all of the teeth loosened due to periodontal disease. I told her this required the dentist to examine her teeth to give her the best treatment plan, so I made an appointment for her for the next morning at ten o'clock. She came on time; as she walked in, I observed that she was a Chinese woman in her fifties. I greeted and welcomed her and gave her some forms to fill out. After a short time, I led her to the examination room and waited for my husband to check her teeth.

After careful examination and taking a full-mouth x-ray, the patient's periodontal disease was indeed severe because the gums were not healthy. Her teeth had loosened over time. She complained about the pain caused by periodontal disease. The woman turned and asked my husband, "I want to remove all of my teeth so I can have a full denture. Does that work?"

My husband replied, "You can go to the periodontologist to ask for a second opinion and ask him/her to make an assessment to see if it is possible to do some surgery to improve your oral health. If the periodontologist recommends that you don't need to remove all your teeth, you can give your teeth another chance."

Unexpectedly, this woman said, almost without thinking, "I don't want to see any other doctor. Let's just make a full denture." We asked her to sign the consent form and agreed on the

treatment plan. In addition to her dental coverage, we also explained that she needed to pay a portion of the medical expenses. She agreed immediately.

After three months, with all her teeth extracted, her gum wounds were fully healed. We decided to go on making a full denture for her. I politely called the woman to ask her about her progress and when she was available to come in for an appointment. I also mentioned that she needed to pay eight hundred dollars for her copayment. But the conversation between her and me was something I could not believe had happened! The woman started screaming on the phone in an aggressive tone, "I want to file a lawsuit because you extracted all my teeth without my consent! You have to compensate for the depressive episodes I have gone through since I lost all of my teeth!" I was shocked and wondered how she could make these claims because we knew she signed the consent form. We did not do anything without her consent.

I firmly responded, "You agreed to sign the consent form to remove the teeth and asked to make a full denture. Do you not remember any of that at all?"

"I won't pay any money," the woman shouted back. "If you bother me again, I will kill you with a gun."

I was scared to death and hung up the phone. I told my husband that this woman's attitude was horrible. All she wanted was to avoid paying her fees and threatened to shoot us. We immediately prayed to God, asking Him to protect us from harm and to calm the woman's heart. We were worried all day because her threatening voice was always inside my mind. I prayed to God to protect my family, give us peace, and forgive this woman. Since then, we never saw her again. Her purpose was not wanting to pay, so we forgave her. This incident was the only time

we had encountered difficult and mean patients in the practice. My husband and I thank God for protecting us from this incident.