

The pictures on the right are of a lady that went abroad in order to avoid the 'high' cost of dental care in Canada. Unfortunately, she saved nothing and is worse off for her efforts. We all have cases we are not proud of but almost every possible iatrogenic endodontic mishap was encountered in this case. The treatment was substandard and the patient was never informed of the poor prognosis afterwards.

Dental tourism includes new Canadians travelling to their country of origin. These people may have a false sense of security as they speak the lingua franca and have relatives living in the area. However, the woman above returned to her 'old country' for what she thought was a deal. Familiarity with a local language and culture does not equate knowledge of the regional standard of care.

I am impressed the high skill level of BC, Alberta, and Yukon general dentists. The dental market in Western Canada is competitive and the populace has a relatively high dental IQ. Our patients are informed consumers with easy access to care. One needs to be a skilled practitioner to do well here and this is the 'carrot' that helps maintain our high standards.

Other jurisdictions may not have analogous licensing and accreditation protocols for dental education, dentists, dental staff, inspection of dental offices, radiation use, dental materials, sterilisation, ethics, continuing education, privacy, etc... Canadian dentists are well trained professionals with numerous responsibilities. We are held accountable for any misstep, be it patients leaving the practice, bad social media reviews, involvement of the dental association or college, and ultimately the courts. The BC College of Dental Surgeons will impose sanctions on any BC dentist who provides inadequate care; public safety is the primary concern of our regulatory bodies. Insurance companies closely monitor our billing practices and impose strict penalties for infractions. These are the 'sticks' that ensure we are ethical and provide a high standard of care for every patient. Dental tourists cannot assume they will enjoy the same protection or high standards as our regulatory bodies and courts are powerless to address foreign mal treatment.

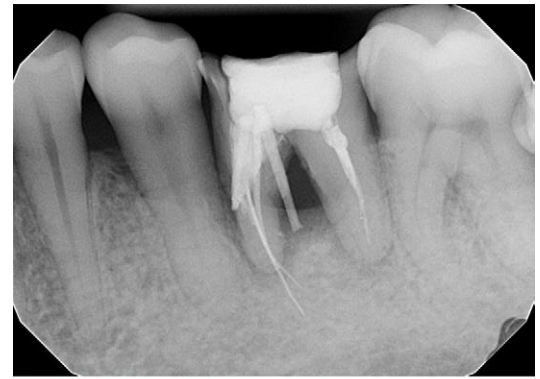
A recent Albertan study cited the significant and growing costs of rectifying complications from medical tourism. Many of the medical tourists are worse off for their adventures with life altering complications and permanent disabilities. Consideration is being given to holding medical tourists liable for all costs related to complications associated with their foreign treatment. It is not unreasonable for Canadian insurance companies to consider refusing coverage for procedures necessary to address complications dental tourists encounter. Regardless of the jurisdiction, it is always cheaper to have a procedure done well once.

Dental tourism and the allure of supposed 'cheaper' treatment is not a risk-free panacea. There is little we can do to stop deal seekers taking risks abroad and we cannot partake in the international race to the bottom. Fortunately dental tourism is not all one way. A growing number of foreign nationals are coming to Canada because of our high standard of care; they recognise the value of the investment in their health. Our best defence is to maintain our high standards.

Regards,



Joel N. Fransen
BSc(OT), DMD, FRCD(C)
Certified Specialist in Endodontics



Richmond Endodontic Centre
Dr. Joel N. Fransen

110-11300 No.5 Rd
Richmond, BC V7A 5J7
office@endodonticcentre.com
T 604.274.3499
F 604.274.3477

Office Hours
8am to 5pm - Monday to Friday
Extended hours are also available

The Richmond Endodontic Centre Boardroom is open; it is available for meetings, lectures, and study clubs. Please come by and have a look at our new presentation centre!