How to Prepare for an Interview

Congrats, you’ve got the interview! Now what?
Here are some ideas and tips for when you secure interest from the media and schedule an interview.

Your Audience Wants to Know: “What’s in it for me?”

Remember you are speaking to the general public and they have a collective question: “What’s in it for me?” The answer, “Orthodontic treatment helps people.” As an orthodontist, your most important message is how orthodontic treatment benefits the patient. Everything you do is geared toward improving the patient’s health and well-being. As an orthodontist, you are concerned about the WHOLE patient — and that includes orthodontic health, dental health, general physical health and overall welfare. Regardless of the materials or techniques used to effect orthodontic treatment, the purpose of the treatment is to benefit the patient.

Key Messages

These are some key messages to communicate about orthodontics:

- The lifetime value of orthodontic treatment: a healthy, beautiful smile.
- All children should get a check-up with an orthodontic specialist no later than age 7.
- Adult treatment (healthy teeth can be moved at any age).
- Affordability (via convenient payment plans, tax-advantaged accounts such as flexible spending accounts, dental insurance that includes orthodontic benefits).
- Orthodontists are specialists: orthodontists receive an additional two to three years of specialized education beyond dental school to learn the proper way to align and straighten teeth; and because orthodontists are specialists, it means the scope of practice is only orthodontics.
- Only those who have successfully completed the formal education required to be an orthodontist may call themselves an “orthodontist,” and only orthodontists are admitted for membership in the American Association of Orthodontists (AAO membership is the public’s assurance that the doctor is an orthodontist).

Talking Points

Here is additional messaging to reinforce your expertise and help keep the interview on track:

- More than one patient in five is an adult.
- You’re never too old for orthodontic treatment – healthy teeth can be moved at any age.
- AAO Age 7 Check-Up Recommendation (all children should get a check-up with an orthodontic specialist no later than age 7) – the orthodontist will be looking for growth
patterns in the jaws and face, sucking habits, problems in speech or problems in breathing.

- Possible outcomes from a check-up
  - Treatment indicated, but beginning when child is older
  - Treatment indicated, should begin soon
  - Treatment is not likely to be needed/parental peace of mind

- The goal of the orthodontist is to provide the most appropriate treatment at the most appropriate time.
- How early treatment, if indicated, can guide the growth of the face and jaws.
- Most children begin orthodontic treatment between the ages of 9 and 14.
- The physiological process of moving teeth is the same in adults, teens and children.
- Orthodontic treatment is a team effort: patients can help ensure success by brushing, flossing, and having cleanings at the dentist and avoiding off-limits foods.
- Retainers — why they are so important.
- New technologies that are popular now: clear aligners, TADS, self-ligating braces, etc.

Helpful Tips

- The reporter is the conduit to your audience. Your audience is the general public. Remember that your audience is thinking about what you say in terms of “what’s in it for me?” The answer is a healthy and beautiful smile.

- Avoid jargon. To the public, an “appliance” is a refrigerator or stove.

- Reporters often request to talk with patients. Have patients in mind that you can refer to the reporter. Make sure to get appropriate permissions from patients.

- Smile, relax and be confident. You are the expert and know more about the subject than the person you’ll be talking with.

- There is no such thing as “off the record.” Say only what you want to be heard on the air or seen in print or online.

- **PRACTICE out loud with someone** — a staff member, your spouse, or someone from the AAO Communications and Marketing staff. If you are doing a TV interview, self-record a practice interview with someone. Decide what you like and what you want to improve. Do the same for a radio interview with an audio recorder.

- If doing a television interview, always look at the reporter, NOT the camera. The camera will find you. Your job is to have a natural conversation with the reporter.

- Use the reporter’s name. It makes the interview feel more like a conversation: relaxed and natural.
• Offer to provide the reporter and/or producer suggested questions to ask. It will be helpful for the reporter (who will appear to know the right questions to ask) and it will help you guide the interview to areas you would like to discuss.

• For any type of interview, if you don’t know the answer, it is perfectly acceptable to say so and offer to research the question and get back to the reporter with the information. Be sure to ask what their deadline is and respond in time.

• Whenever possible, suggest that a TV or newspaper interview be done at your office. You will be in comfortable, familiar surroundings. The reporter/editor will get a better feel for who you are and what you do. It will be advantageous for you, too, because you have the ability to show and tell the reporter/editor about your practice.

• In the case of radio interviews, do your best to schedule the interview in-studio rather than over the phone. An in-person interview, where both people can read body language and nonverbal cues, can result in a more engaging interview and personal rapport. It can often lead to you becoming a ‘go to’ source for future stories. In addition, the sound quality in a studio is superior to that of a telephone. However, if an in-studio interview is impossible and you schedule a phone interview, be sure to use a landline (as opposed to a cell phone) for the best audio quality.

Attire

When an interview is taking place at your office, wear your normal office attire. Or, if you do not ordinarily do so, you may supplement your normal attire with a lab coat, to add a professional look.

For interviews taking place outside your office, dress in standard business attire such as a suit and dress shoes.

Important Tips for TV

MEN

• Wear a suit and a long-sleeved shirt. Avoid white shirts. Solid (no pattern) blue, tan or gray shirts look better on camera.
• Wear a simple tie.
• Be sure your socks are long enough that bare leg does not show, and that the socks are darker than the suit.
• Make sure your shoes are polished.
• If make-up is offered, accept it. Without make-up, lights tend to bounce off the subject with an unpleasant shine. A touch of make-up lets your face absorb the light and gives you a more natural look.
• Be sure you are clean-shaven (if not wearing a beard). A “5 o’clock shadow” can be distracting for the viewer.
WOMEN

- Wear a suit with a sleeved blouse or with a dress. Solid (no pattern) blue, purple, winter white, burgundy and gray look good on camera.
- Be sure your skirt is long enough to cover your knees when seated.
- Wear something to which a microphone may be clipped.
- Wear close-toed shoes.
- Bring along an extra pair of hose.
- Wear make-up.

FOR EVERYONE

- If standing during the interview, keep your jacket buttoned.
- If seated for the interview, unbutton your jacket, sit up straight, and sit with legs together (men may cross legs at the knee).
- Look at the person asking the questions, and maintain good eye contact. DO NOT look at the camera.
- Gesture appropriately.
- Keep your face expressive.
- Smile when appropriate—after all, creating healthy, beautiful smiles is what you’re all about!
- Avoid excessive jewelry. If you must wear jewelry, keep it simple.
- If you normally wear glasses, wear them for the TV interview.
- Speak clearly. Avoid orthodontic “jargon.” To the lay public, an appliance is a refrigerator.
- Keep your answers short.
- The camera likes to see action. “Talking heads” (when just the interviewer and interviewee are talking) are boring. So have visuals available for the camera to look at such as typodonts, a variety of retainers or samples of brightly colored ligatures.
- Do a quick check before starting the interview, being sure that your hair is combed, your tie is straight, and your teeth are clean.
- Always assume that your microphone is on. Say only that which you would want to hear on the air.