

Camperdown Falls General Dentistry
M. Thomas Edwards, Jr., D.M.D., P.A.

19 Cleveland Street
Greenville, SC 29601

864-232-6911
FAX 864-232-5159
Smileenhancement.com

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To the Editor:

The issues surrounding healthcare delivery in this country are much more than money issues. Your recent article concerning dentists and managed "care" said nothing about doctor/patient relationship, trust, ability to diagnose and treat, and the different standards of care available. Who decides these issues? Well, the doctor sets his or her standards of care based on their training, a love of the profession chosen to practice, continuing education which he or she chooses to remain sharp and prepared, and how they view their fellow man. Then, fees that are charged for treatment have to reflect that standard. If not, the business will fail.

Webster defines care as many things: to attend to, provide for, to be concerned or feel an interest. The definition I like the best is "serious mental attention, watchful keeping, and regard." These things are not "managed," but are communicated to patients through sincere, heartfelt relationships. Managed care is an oxymoron. Really, what we are seeing is "managed cost." Insurance companies have succeeded in duping the public and their employers that this "care" by the numbers or "volume delivery" is in their best interest. The only interests served in a "managed cost" environment for dentistry is the bottom line of the insurance companies. People make purchasing decisions every day based on what standards they perceive. Individuals want the freedom to decide who provides their healthcare in an environment that includes the patient's best interest. It is presumptuous for big business to dilute the doctor/patient relationship and the doctor's standard of care, just to lower overhead.

The patient must have a choice. If they abdicate this freedom, either the government or big business will step in and take it away. Regardless of the pressures placed on dentists to sign with big business, and there are many, it is my personal belief that there will always be that individual who will seek out the professional for treatment, where decisions are made based on a personal doctor/patient relationship (free from nonprofessional dictates), not the balance sheet of big business.

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