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Setting the Foundation for a Lifetime of Oral Health

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Setting the Foundation for a Lifetime of Oral Health

By Samuel Blanchard, DDS, MS
President, Michigan Academy of Pediatric Dentistry

Welcome back to another Children's Dental Health Month article series from the Michigan Academy of Pediatric Dentistry in our *MDA Journal*. This has become a yearly tradition and, as always, the MAPD is happy to once again be a part of it.

As dentists, we recognize that relationships and trust are critical to our practice. I deeply appreciate the collaboration between our state dental society and our state specialty society in promoting the dental health of children. While most children in our state may never be treated by a pediatric dentist, the ability to share new treatments and refreshers on exciting approaches ensures that we all provide evidence-based care.

The quality of care and patient satisfaction hinges not only on the technical skills and knowledge of the dentist, but also on the interpersonal skills and rapport established with patients and their parents. In pediatric dentist-

ry, this is particularly evident, as many of our patients are referred to us by their general dentists. These patients trust us because of the relationships we've already built with other professionals.

Recently, I made a significant change in my career. After 12 years of practicing as an associate pediatric dentist, I transitioned to become a partner in another office closer to home. This decision wasn't made lightly. It involved leaving behind relationships I had cultivated with patients, parents, colleagues, and co-workers. This transition has underscored how much I value these professional relationships. Whether it's with my patients and their parents, or my fellow dental professionals, these connections require effort, respect, and time to establish. The rewards of creating these relationships may not always be immediately evident, but they are invaluable.



There are instances where a patient or parent immediately trusts my opinion and follows my recommended treatment plan. However, more often than not, this trust is something that is earned over time, through consistent care and genuine interactions.

Another powerful way we achieve this is through the age-1 dental visit. This preventive care measure aims to create a dental home for children, either by their first birthday or within six months of the eruption of their first tooth. Parents often feel anxious or uncertain about their child's dental needs. The age-1 dental visit allows us to establish rapport and trust. We take the time to listen to their concerns and address any questions they may have. We also provide anticipatory guidance to parents on essential aspects of oral hygiene, nutrition, fluoride use, injury prevention, and oral habits.

Empowering parents with knowledge sets the foundation for a lifetime of good oral health for their little ones. These early interventions can make a significant difference in preventing future dental problems. Importantly, this visit isn't just about teeth — it's about overall health, too. A positive experience early on can set the stage for a lifetime of good health practices. Once we've established these relation-

ships with our patients (and especially with the parents of minors), we find that they become more comfortable expressing their concerns and are open to our recommendations. It's a collaborative journey toward healthier smiles!

The articles on the following pages provide updated information and insights on important issues and treatments in pediatric dentistry. They can help you make informed decisions and recommendations for your patients. I would like to thank you for taking the time to read these articles, and for supporting organized dentistry. Organized dentistry is vital for our profession, as it allows us to collaborate, advocate, and educate. It also provides us with the power of numbers in the Legislature, allowing us to advocate for our profession and patients. By joining forces with our colleagues and associations, we can ensure that we provide the best possible care for our patients, and that we uphold the highest standards of ethics and excellence in our profession. ●

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