

July 27, 2023

**American Association of Orthodontists
401 North Lindbergh Boulevard
St. Louis, MO 63141-7816**

RE: AAO Video on Aligner Therapy

1. Recently, the International Association for Orthodontics became aware of an AAO promotional video. The video was titled "Straight Talk-Episode 3: Who's More Qualified to Straighten Teeth, The Orthodontist or The Dentist".

2. The subject matter and message is troublesome and misleading. It depicts general dentist orthodontic providers as inferior to AAO orthodontic specialist providers, who limit their practice to orthodontic treatment only.

3. Many General Dentists have hundreds, if not thousands of hours of continuing education training in delivery of orthodontic care. The AAO video suggests that only an AAO orthodontist specialist has adequate education in the field.

4. Therefore, as the largest and oldest international organization for general dentist orthodontic providers, the IAO feels a responsibility to respond to the video. The IAO organization encourages the teaching, mentoring, and support of general dentist members who choose to provide orthodontic services to their patients. Said support includes access to the IAO Professional Advancement Program and University accreditation with two year Masters of Science Degree in Specialty Orthodontics.

5. The IAO Mission Statement outlines the association's purpose.

a. The first point is related to the dissemination of orthodontic knowledge to address dental malocclusion and its various negative impacts on the patient. With orthodontics being a dynamic field of dentistry, orthodontic diagnosis and treatment requires constant training and upgrading in the advanced treatment modalities and technologies, such as Clear Aligners treatment, that our organization continually offers.

b. The second point is to minimize professional isolationism within the orthodontic treatment field, to create an atmosphere conducive to harmonious relationships among all general dentist and specialist orthodontic practitioners, as well as among other dental and medical specialties.

6. It is important to note that both of the above IAO ideologies of purpose are oriented toward the goal of enhancing the availability of orthodontic treatment to the public. To implement this goal, the IAO encourages its general dentist orthodontic practitioner members to foster positive relationships with local orthodontist specialists as well as with the other dental specialties.

7. In view of the above, the IAO feels that the subject AAO video presents a negative message and will only work to fracture those inter-professional relationships, thereby negatively affecting the public's access to orthodontic care.

8. The partnering of oral health care providers at the community level can only improve a geographic area's access to patient treatment.

For example, the message in the AAO Video may also cause undue damage to underserved communities. As informed by Invisalign:

70% of children and adults have a malocclusion. The population of the USA in 2021 was approximately 332,000,000 while at the same time the number of orthodontist specialists was 15,228 (March 2, 2023). This means there is one orthodontist specialist for every 15,261 patients.

The above noted gap between US orthodontists case load ability and patient needs could have devastating consequences to public access to orthodontic treatment.

9. The above example illustrates that the significant demand for orthodontic care cannot be met by orthodontist specialists alone. Limiting orthodontic treatment to orthodontist specialists alone, could lead to inflated treatment costs. Without general dental practitioners stepping forward to handle the orthodontic caseload, only the wealthiest could afford care for their families.

10. A further major concern is that these demographics apply to orthodontic treatment access across the United States, Canada and the world as a whole. These demographics are not uniformly representative of each community across the United States, Canada and the world as a whole.

11. Many regions have few to no orthodontist specialists. General practitioner dentists trained in orthodontics can fill the void. Without the general practitioner providing orthodontic treatment, these underserved communities would be left at a debilitating disadvantage from an orthodontic care perspective. Families without the means to travel great distances to see an orthodontist specialist would go untreated.

12. In part, due to the patient access impact outlined above, it is generally accepted the definition of the procedures provided by a general dentist state: "General Dentist can, in most cases, perform the same procedures as a specialist performs." The highest authority has recognized the role played by general practitioners in orthodontics.

13. Part of that role is to refer the patient to an orthodontic specialist when indicated. The reason could be the complexity of a procedure, the patient's health, or simply the

general dentist's opinion that a certain procedure warrants extra, specialized training. Nevertheless, the general dentist is the primary dental care provider that patients typically consult to assess the complexity of the procedure. To mislead patients of this crucial function significantly impacts the overall care available to the public.

14. It must be apparent to the AAO that many universities in the US and around the world offer accredited training to dental students to provide simple clear aligner correction of the misaligned dentition, as an important treatment option for a future general dentist. Therefore, it must be reasonable to assume that all members of the AAO want great relationships and referrals from their colleagues. We all are looking for the best treatment plan and outcome for our patients, and enjoy being able to discuss all possibilities of using an interdisciplinary collegial approach.

15. Furthermore, the AAO is suppose to hold its organization and its members to a high standard of professional conduct. This can be seen in the document, Principles of Ethics, Code of Professional Conduct and Advisory Opinions of the American Association of Orthodontists. However, the subject AAO video clearly violates 5.A. (ix).

Members must assure that their public statements with respect to their practice or the specialty are true. Statements should be avoided that contain a representation or implication regarding the quality of orthodontic or other health care services, which (a) suggest superiority relative to other practitioners, unless it is acknowledged that each orthodontist uses different techniques based on training and experience, and that such claim is the orthodontist's individual perspective, and/or (b) are not susceptible to reasonable verification, by the public, and/or are intended or likely to create an unjustified expectation about results that can be achieved.

16. The AAO video misrepresents the general dentist's role in orthodontic treatment across the country. It also implies that orthodontist specialists are the only practitioners with adequate orthodontic-focused training and education. This is a factually false representation of general dentist orthodontic providers within the US and Canada as well as other parts of the world.

17. The IAO and AAO both represent orthodontic providers in the oral care community. Their members' interests are the business of each of the respective associations. Of their members' interests, patient orthodontic care is the overarching bridge between each practitioner. This AAO video is creating a divide between general dentist orthodontic providers and orthodontist specialist providers. This can only negatively impact the treatment received by the end patient.

18. In summary, as a professional organization the AAO sponsorship of such a misleading video, violates its own Principles of Ethics, Code of Professional Conduct and Advisory Opinions of the American Association of Orthodontists, noted above.

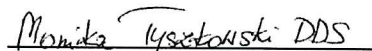
19. The AAO should desist in this negative type of promotion and hold itself to a higher standard which meets its own stated Principles of Ethics, Code of Professional Conduct and Advisory Opinions of the American Association of Orthodontists.

20. Creating a Bachelor TV show parody that demeans general practitioners does not meet said standards and is unacceptable.

21. The IAO respectfully requests the AAO to take down the "Straight Talk-Episode 3: Who's More Qualified to Straighten Teeth, The Orthodontist or The Dentist".

22. The IAO further respectfully requests the AAO to adhere to its own stated Principles of Ethics, Code of Professional Conduct and Advisory Opinions of the American Association of Orthodontists, and consider patient and inter-professional impact consequences for all future messaging and promotional activity.

Very Respectfully,

Handwritten signature of Monika Tyszkowski in cursive script.

Monika Tyszkowski, DDS
IAO President

Handwritten signature of Chris McKay in cursive script.

Chris McKay, MBA
IAO Executive Director