

Serious Smile Education

by Wm. J. Schlotz, D.D.S.



Sara, a relatively young, attractive and very nice gal arrived at our office for an aesthetic smile improvement consultation. She had already visited with a dentist who offered Lumineers (Ultra-Thin Porcelain Veneers) as a treatment option. I surmised through our conversation that it might have been Sara who initiated Lumineers as a treatment choice to enhance her smile. And I would bet her awareness of Lumineers can be attributed to the parent company Den-Mat, and their prodigious marketing efforts aimed directly at the lay public.

Right or not about Sara, fact is many people are stimulated and motivated to act by direct dental manufacturer to consumer marketing efforts like Den-Mat. They claim a veneer so thin that NO tooth structure need be removed. I often consult with patients with similar inquiring minds about Lumineers, as well as other popular dentistry treatments such as Invisalign, Zoom Whitening and the PerioProtect gum trays. Largely, the direct marketing, which bypasses the dental professional is a means to education and is a good thing. That is, unless the message isn't entirely accurate.

Back to Sara: She was very happy to hear that there were many types of Ultra-Thin Porcelain Veneers and that I really liked them a lot. In fact, UTPV's were my absolute, bar-none favourite (English spelling for emphasis only, not because those crazy Brits are known for their wildly attractive smiles) oral aesthetic treatment option. Hopefully, for a brief moment, her eyes widened and her mildly compromised smile emerged through drawn lip-curtains. With minimal pause, and much more emphasis, I continued. "UTPV's are only for smiles with certain and distinct characteristics. Unfortunately, yours is not one of them."

Her gesture collapse was immediate. With lips re-drawn, her eyes seemed to scream --For a good time - don't call this DDS. "What about my previous consult with the other dentist?" she asked. I could only answer with facts, not Monday morning mind-reading. Many a cosmetic case has gone awry due to unreal expectations, sometimes born of trying to please a patient. I've re-treated enough of them to know. And, yes, some have been my own: Thankfully, not recently.

Den-Mat would have Dentists place UTPV's on all teeth without preparation of the tooth at all. That's the marketing memo and that's what many patients arrive at my office expecting. Sorry, Chiclets are to be chewed, not worn as a smile. I think there are many folks out there with cosmetic needs, who have seen too many false smiles, making them hesitant to improve their own. That's too bad, but I can't blame them.

Maybe my consultation wasn't amusing; hopefully it will spare a patient disappointment down the road. I offered Sara aesthetic treatment options that were right for her, including UTPV's, with some minimal tooth preparation, so they would look both pretty and real. I also offered her a cost-sensitive solution of composite resin bonding. Showing her some of our own actual before-after case photos of same made Sara Smile (That's for you Hall & Oates' fans). See some actual cases at TheConservativeDentist.com

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