

Dear Patient,

I hope this letter finds you well during these dog days of summer. I hope you've enjoyed plenty of lazy, hazy days over the last couple of months. For us big kids who don't have to go back to school in August summer keeps rolling on though September, maybe October if we're lucky. For the little kids school is in session or just around the corner and I'd like to remind folks to make appointments sooner rather than later as we can get rather booked up.

I think early September might be my favorite time of year. In this case, my wife and I anticipate the birth of our first child in late September. Susan is already not so comfortable anymore and I think we're both eager to arrive at our son's birthday. We will soon be initiated into the ranks of parenthood and all that it entails. I will join the multitudes proudly carrying pictures and boasting of accomplishments and milestones achieved by offspring. I already glimpse ahead to the future and hope for baseball games, cub scouts, driving lessons and generally teaching the little guy everything I know. And, like everyone, I hope he'll do a little better than me.

But before I get all misty eyed thinking about the future, I suppose I shouldn't overlook the small pleasures of diaper changing, 4am feedings and who knows what else. For now, we are getting the nursery together and looking forward anxiously to that first time of feeling like we don't have a clue. Susan has read every book, watched every video and knows things about babies that Dr. Spock doesn't know and I'm reading a little myself. I'm confident that my folks will be getting a few "what the hell do we do now" calls, though.

Of course our dog Barkly has no idea what is about to happen. He has no idea why "Food Girl" (aka Susan) has gotten bigger and I've not noticed him doing any outside research to prepare for the birth of a new pack mate. This despite the fact that we've told him over and over again that a baby is on the way. Oh well, Barkly isn't much of a planner anyway. He pretty much takes life as it comes and wings it by the seat of his pants. Sometimes I envy his cavalier, devil may care attitude. Then again, I have far fewer "accidents" inside the house. And he never saves any receipts for his income taxes. But I know he looks at me and my worries and my plans and thinks to himself, "Food Guy is crazy." And then a few minutes later..."I wonder if Food Guy has any food."

Not long ago I was browsing through the comedy CD section at a store and the Bill Cosby (well known for a couple of hilarious bits about dentistry) stuff caught my eye. Patients mention something regarding those skits about once

a week but they aren't the only ones who love them. Cosby has actually entertained at the national convention for the American Dental Association. Since I hadn't heard these hysterically funny stories in years I gave them another listen. I've been a dentist for 7 years but I've been in the chair for a filling and I can identify with those stories! I haven't heard a comedian tell a Cosby-like tale about the dental chair-hopefully that means dentistry has made a few advances.

Dentists (or maybe it's just me) take note of references to dentistry in movies and entertainment. For some reason I can't quite figure out, dentists are often portrayed as peculiar, quirky characters. Personally, I wonder if it might be because the general public can't imagine why a person would pick a career that involved looking in different people's mouths all day. To that I would say this: I am glad I am not a proctologist.

Favorite Popular References: Numerous episodes of Seinfeld revolved around dentists. The Whole Nine Yards with Bruce Willis featured Mathew Perry in a hilarious turn as a cowardly dentist. That one contained the classic line by Willis after finding out his neighbor is a dentist when he simply asks: "Suicidal?" Steve Martin has played a dentist in 2 movies: a noir thriller that nobody saw and the all-time cult classic Little Shop of Horrors in which he played a sadistic dentist with an Elvis complex. In that movie Bill Murray was a masochist who showed up requesting a "long, slow, painful root canal." Corbin Bernsen was unintentionally ridiculous in the "horror" movie The Dentist. The king of all dental movies, unfortunately, is The Marathon Man which terrified an entire generation of dental patients. In a memorable (understatement of the century) final scene, the evil Nazi dentist gets his comeuppance courtesy of Dustin Hoffman. I much prefer an innocuous character like Bob Newhart's dentist neighbor in the original Newhart. Secretly, I think Bob Newhart may have been a dentist in another life. He also has been an entertainer for the national dental convention. Legendary newsman Walter Cronkite, whose father was a dentist, spoke to the convention a couple of years ago. Its always interesting to see Doc Holiday (a dentist) portrayed in the movies (I like Val Kilmer in Tombstone). Interestingly enough, the famous Grant Wood painting, American Gothic (you know it as the one with the plain looking farmer standing next to his plain looking wife with a pitchfork in the foreground) features the artist's dentist as his model for the farmer. Creepy. And while this doesn't have anything to do with entertainment I'll leave you with this nugget: a dentist, not surprisingly, invented the golf tee. Since I'm starting to feel like Paul Harvey at the end of this I'll simply finish with his trademark: "...Goodday."