

## **Dr. Amélie Fournier - Patients' Perspectives on the Dentist's Role When Treating People with Eating Disorders**

Dr. O'Keefe: Today I am delighted to welcome Dr. Amélie Fournier. She's now a GP dentist in Northern Ontario, but she recently graduated from McGill dentistry. And I came across her recently when she participated in the CDA-Dentsply Sirona Student Clinician Research Program. And she's here today to talk to us about her project. Amélie, what problem did you investigate?

Dr. Fournier: So, first of all, thank you for welcoming me. Hi Dr. O'Keefe. It's a pleasure for me to be here. So, what did I study? So I initially, because eating disorders and mental illness are becoming such a prevalent thing in our everyday society, and having dealt with an eating disorder myself in the past, I really felt the need to research on how us dental professional could help that community and make that community feel really welcome at the dental office so that we can help as much as we can.

Dr. O'Keefe: Well, what did you do?

Dr. Fournier: So, what did I do? So initially my project was a really big, big project that I wanted. I had to narrow it down. So, I thought of what is the first step I would like to do. The first step I wanted to do was really see what patients think about dentists. How would they would like to be treated in the dental office, what we're doing correctly, what we could be doing better. So, I interviewed around 18 participants to get their feedback on their past dental experiences. How they were treated in regards to their eating disorders. Were dentists knowledgeable? And how they would like, um, what their perspective was on addressing the topic in a dental setting?

Dr. O'Keefe: So, what you're really looking to get to is can dentists and dental team members be part of the circle of care, to help people get through eating disorders? Am I right in picking up?

Dr. Fournier: Exactly. So, recovering from an eating disorder requires an enormous amount of people, a huge team, nutritionists, psychologists, MDs. And dental practitioners can certainly be part of that circle of care as the patient, um, I mean the most support they can get the better recovery outcomes will be. So really implicating dentists in that circle of care was really important for me.

Dr. O'Keefe: Right. Well, what are the perspectives of patients with eating disorders about us and how we can help?

Dr. Fournier: So, there are many. We talked about seven things in our research. So, first of all patients really wanted to make sure that us dentists know that it's mental illness

rather than a choice. Recovery takes time. So, depending on their stages of recovery, for the patients it was really important for them to be given different treatment options, for example. If a patient is still very symptomatic, for example bulimic patients that purge a lot, well, doing a restoration right now or doing a complete smile makeover at that point may not be the ideal treatment. You really want to offer treatments that are helpful for that patient at that time. Having the dentists be as knowledgeable about eating disorders. Understanding all the symptoms. Because we do sometimes in dental school talk about eating disorders and the effect it can have on the oral cavity, however, we don't learn about all the subtle symptoms, the subtle signs, or signs that are just less common, which can be missed a lot of times

Dr. O'Keefe: Based on what you found and your experience and now you're out doing it, tell me, what can I do to be a better carer for a patient with an eating disorder?

Dr. Fournier: So, discussion is the most important thing. Patients really want to know that the dentist is there to listen without judgment. So not having a preconceived idea of what the patient might be feeling. Really having and emphasizing an empathetic communication. Opening up to the patient. Asking them how you can help. But really, creating a nonjudgmental environment for the patient will really be the base of starting that good patient relationship and eventually leading to a better outcome for both parties

Dr. O'Keefe: And dentists can consider themselves and, with the right steps, be considered as part of the effective circle of care for people.

Dr. Fournier: Yes, exactly.

Dr. Fournier: Well, I just want to just commend you for talking so openly and honestly and relating to the topic and you've got a lot of street cred as a dentist communicating this message to your colleagues. And I want to thank you for taking time to speak to us today about it.

Dr. Fournier: Well, thank you so much for having me. It's a pleasure.

Dr. O'Keefe: Well, we invite audience members to go and watch Amélie's PowerPoint presentation and it's in the Oasis post that accompanies this interview.

Dr. Fournier: Perfect.