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Dear Dr Hancocks

Re Mew J, Trenouth M What does the Dentists Act say about orthodontic treatment choice?

It is news to me that 'it is only within the last few years that some American orthodontists have started to recommend expansion'. I was taught how to expand a dental arch (transverse, anterior and posterior expansion) to correct a malocclusion, when I started as a postgraduate orthodontic trainee in 1991. I continued to use expansion in clinical practice, whenever I considered it appropriate for an individual patient. I was also taught, and regularly treated young people using functional appliances and without requesting removal of premolars. Although I believed and explained to the young people and their parents that orthodontic treatment could straighten the teeth, improve their smile and improve their social well-being, I never claimed that, using these techniques, I could consistently and significantly change their skeletal pattern or cure them of breathing difficulties, temporomandibular disorders, wetting the bed or a number of other conditions, which it has been suggested malocclusion can cause.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Benson

Emeritus Professor of Orthodontics