

August 10, 2010

## Fact Sheet

### Findings: Ipsos Reid Public Opinion Survey of Dentists and the Dental Profession

In late 2009, the Canadian Dental Association and the provincial dental associations commissioned a survey of Canadians on their views towards dentists, dentistry, and oral health care.

Approximately 3,500 Canadians were surveyed by Ipsos Reid and 14 focus groups were held across the country. Below are the findings from those focus groups and the survey, which has a margin of error of plus or minus 1.96 percentage points 19 times out of 20.

#### Findings

*Overall conclusions reached by Ipsos Reid:*

- Dentistry is viewed as a “hybrid commercial/health service.”
- The current reputation of dentists as a whole is resting on precarious levels of trust and skepticism of the value that dentists offer – particularly in relation to insurance plan coverage.
- More Canadians “completely agree” or “agree” with the statement “Dentists are business people” than those who “completely agree” or “agree” that “Dentists are doctors” (63% vs. 57%).
- Canadians say they know what they need to do from an oral health maintenance perspective, but what they don’t do consistently is act on this knowledge because they don’t see any real short-term negative consequences.
- While a majority of Canadians do not see dentistry as only cosmetic, the cosmetic aspect does raise doubts about the value of dentistry and the motives of dentists.
- Many people assume that the cosmetic side of the profession is largely driven by dentists looking for revenue and is, therefore, not really about patient health or well-being.

- Cost variations between dentists may be a given, but they need to be explained.
- Having to pay for dental care makes dentistry less than a pure health service for many Canadians since universal health care is such a strong part of the national identity.

*Issue: Trust and Value*

- 59% of Canadians hold an unequivocally positive view of dentists.
- Only 7% of Canadians, however, “completely agree” that dentists provide good value.
- Only 9% of Canadians “completely agree” that they trust dentists.
- Most Canadians seem to accept their dentists’ diagnosis when it is more serious. However, they are very sceptical about the need for preventive care.

*Issue: Impact of Dental Plans*

- Dental plans matter and, if they decline in quantity and comprehensiveness, people will increasingly have questions about the value of dentists and dental care.
- Only 29% of Canadians agree unequivocally that they would still get regular check-ups from a dentist if they didn’t have a dental plan.
- In determining the frequency of their dental visits, even those Canadians with a positive impression of dentists are more likely to say that their level of dental coverage takes precedence over the advice of their dentist.