

Dentist has knack with nervous patients

By MAGGIE HANNAH
Herald staff writer

Visiting the dentist is one of those routine tasks a lot of people avoid as being too painful or too frightening to undertake except when some emergency forces them to it.

If the truth were known, however, the real victim in these cases is usually the dentist, not the patient.

Georgetown dental surgeon Brian Markham finds he is getting a lot of patients who are afraid of dentists for whatever reason coming to him because they hear he's pretty good with nervous people. He believes in taking the time to calm his patients and gain their confidence before he begins working. Even at that nervous patients make him a nervous wreck by the end of the day, he says.

"I like to think I'm very good with apprehensive people," he says, "but by the time you spend a day with people who jump every time a tool clatters or you move too suddenly you're exhausted and your nerves are bad. You have to watch it or you bring the tension home."

Dr. Markham isn't alone in the war of nerves. Canadian statistics for 1978 show dentists as having the highest coronary suicide and divorce rates for any professional group.

There are still a lot of old wives tales and misconceptions concerning dentists and these, in combination with previous bad experiences, make many adults avoid dentists like the plague.

"I had a very old lady in once who just had a few teeth left and they were in pretty bad shape," he recalls. "She had gum disease too and she was pretty sick with the infection. I told her she should have the rest of her teeth out and a denture made. She agreed to it except for the one canine tooth. I couldn't pull her eye teeth as she called it because her mother had once told her if she lost her eye teeth she'd go blind. And she believed it. It took me a couple of hours to convince her she wouldn't go blind if I pulled the tooth."

"The general public is really in the dark about a lot of aspects of dentistry," he says.

"More so than with medicine. A lot of people make quite an accurate diagnosis of their ailments as a result of what they've seen in some television medical show. Ben Casey and Emergency and numerous other television shows have done a lot to boost the public's understanding of medicine. But you couldn't revolve a television show around dentistry the way you can around a hospital."

While public education has come a long way in the past 10 years there are still areas of the country where the public's dental health is very poor, he says, and points to Newfoundland as an example. While it might be argued that there are many unemployed residents there who couldn't afford dental work Dr. Markham points out that the government pays dental as well as medical bills for people on relief so that is no excuse for neglecting that aspect of health care.

"It's a matter of where your priorities lie," he says, "and some people seem to have them pretty mixed up. I think dental health is as important as any other aspect of health care. If you got infection in a finger you wouldn't cut off the finger. So why pull out an infected tooth? You were born with it. It's part of your body just like a finger. Yet people come in and say they want all their teeth pulled so they can get a plate. They haven't been watching the commercials very well. Why do they think we have all those creams and powders and things to hold dentures in place - everything from rubber bands to suction cups, if plates were all that good?"

The addition of fluoride to Georgetown's water some years ago has done good things for resident's teeth and Dr. Markham says he can quickly spot patients who live out of town where the water isn't fluoridated.

Dr. Markham uses hypno-therapy with his patients and finds that it produces its own share of problems too. While its uses are phenomenal he finds patients who are so frightened of it that they almost run the other way when they hear that he uses the technique.



Brian Markham

"Hypnosis is no deep, dark secret," he says, "but people conjure up their own version of something they associate it with like a stage show magic act, or something, and it frightens them."

The law has prohibited the use of hypnosis for anything but medical purposes so doctors, dentists and psychologists are the only people legally allowed to practise hypno-therapy.

Although no one knows exactly how hypno-therapy works like acupuncture they know it does work and that's enough at present.

"Patients seem to think I have the power to hypnotize them but that isn't so," Dr. Markham says. "The patient develops the state of hypnosis himself. I only guide him by making appropriate suggestions."

Every person except one who is mentally retarded can be hypnotized, he says. The more intelligent you are the easier you can develop the state of hypnosis. While everyone can develop it the depth of the state will vary with the individual.

"You can't be made to do anything you don't want to do while you are under hypnosis," Dr. Markham says, "because I'm not putting you under hypnosis. You're doing it yourself. You aren't asleep and unless I give a post-hypnotic suggestion otherwise, you will remember everything that happened while you're in hypnosis."

The man who originally stumbled on hypnosis was a

doctor by the name of Mesmer, he says, and from him we got the term mesmerized. He used it to perform surgery at a time when anesthesia was unknown. He apparently never spoke to his patients and induced them to enter the state of hypnosis by passing his hand over them as they lay on a table.

"People were so pre-conditioned to believe that he had some magic power they were almost in a state of trance by the time they hit the table," he chuckles. "That was the secret of course. The fact that they wanted to be hypnotized meant they developed the state, very easily."

Any good hypno-therapist must be a good talker, he says, since the voice is very important in helping the patient to relax and concentrate. Transcendental meditation, yoga and self-hypnosis are "all in the same ballpark" since they

use the same techniques. The technique is even part of the routine taught to mothers in certain types of natural child birth classes.

People go into a state of hypnosis many times every day without even realizing what they're doing, Dr. Markham says. He points to people who take the subway to work every morning, for example, and sit there reading a book through the required number of stops. Then at their stop without even glancing up they'll get off at the right place.

"Or how about driving to work if you use the same route all the time," he says. "Have you ever arrived without remembering what you saw at a certain house or a certain intersection? You know you passed it but you didn't really see it. You were fully aware though and if anything had happened requiring a reaction it would probably have been ever faster than usual because you were concentrating on what you were doing."

Dr. Markham uses hypnosis to treat many types of patient problems but points out that he always makes sure the medical background has been thoroughly checked first before he begins treatment with hypno-therapy.

"I mean, you wouldn't train a mouth-breather to breathe through his nose with hypno-therapy until you made sure he didn't have huge adenoids," he

says. "That could create real problems if you weren't careful."

Dr. Markham came to Georgetown from Scarborough as a high school student and lived on 17 Sideroad west of Georgetown. He began studying sciences at Erindale campus of the University of Toronto and went on to take his doctor of dentistry degree from the University of Western Ontario in London.

He and his wife, Karen, were married at the end of the second year of his four year course. He won a restorative dentistry award the end of his third year and gives his wife the full credit for the jump in grades which enabled him to earn the award. During his fourth year he won a table clinics competition at the Canadian Dental Association Convention in Edmonton.

Dr. Markham graduated in 1977 and practised with Dr. Kurylowicz in Stewarttown

for almost two years. He set up his own practise in Georgetown earlier this year.

Dr. Markham may also be familiar to residents who seem him running each evening. He is in training now for the Skylon Marathon Race to be run between Buffalo, New York and Fort Erie, Ontario in October. He runs nine or 10 miles each evening.

"I started running in university," he says. "I found I was exhausted at the end of a day of classes. If I got out and ran the activity got me up on 1

could study. If I didn't just stayed tired."

"I usually start around eight o'clock every morning and by six at night I'm really tired. If I didn't run I'd really be dragging. I need some sort of activity daily and almost anything else requires a partner. That's pretty hard to arrange to have a partner for something every day. I play ball on a team once a week too, but there's a lot of standing around in a ball game."

Dr. and Mrs. Markham have a 10-month-old son, Stephen.

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Salvation Army opens an office in Acton

By JOHN BOTTOMLEY
Special to The Herald

After a year of working out of Guelph, the Salvation Army has opened an office in Acton. Lieut. and Mrs. Lorne Pritchett are manning the office, and Acton is to be officially declared a corps in September.

The Army has been operating a Sunday School with 30-40 participants throughout the winter.

The United Church has been the site of the school, as well as the Sunday night meetings for adults.

"The Army is not just a social organization," stressed Lieut. Pritchett. "It is a religious denomination."

It has bought a property on Mill Street in Acton where it intends to set up a Citadel. "We'll either buy a portable or build a Citadel," said Lieut. Pritchett.

Because the Salvation Army has been in Acton such a short time, just three weeks since the office opened, it has not yet done much to make itself felt in the community. "We've done nothing yet, because the corps is new."

Right now the Army has adopted a wait and see attitude. "We want to see what the community needs, which needs we can be of service to," Lieut. Pritchett emphasized.

the Salvation Army is not trying to compete with the churches already established in Acton. "The churches here have done a great job. We're here to do our part."

One of the things he would like to do is open one of Salvation Army's thrift shops in town. "I think there is a need in Acton."

Until they can get more space, Lieut. Pritchett and his wife, are operating out of the Ransom Street Apartments. "We're available for counseling," said Lieut. Pritchett. Their number is 853-1140.

According to Lieut. Pritchett it's not unusual to have a Salvation Army centred in a town as small as Acton. There are corps in towns far smaller, he said.

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