

For decades people from around the world have traveled to the United States in search of superior health care at premier facilities with cutting edge research guiding clinical practices. However, a troubling trend has recently emerged as some Americans have begun leaving the U.S. to seek dental care in Mexico. With the hope of saving money, people are risking their general health and potentially long-term well being by crossing the border for their oral health care. Many printed articles on this subject irresponsibly present and encourage this dangerous practice merely as a cost issue.

Mexico, like all third-world countries has little to no regulation or systems in place guaranteeing high standards for its dentists. Unfortunately, this leaves patients totally without protection when treatment fails. Patients are left with no regulatory protection or legal recourse. The Board of Dental Examiners (BODEX) is Arizona's state agency that holds dentists to high and safe standards.

The American legal system and the Board of Dental Examiners cannot help when treatment in Mexico fails.



CONSIDER ALL YOUR OPTIONS

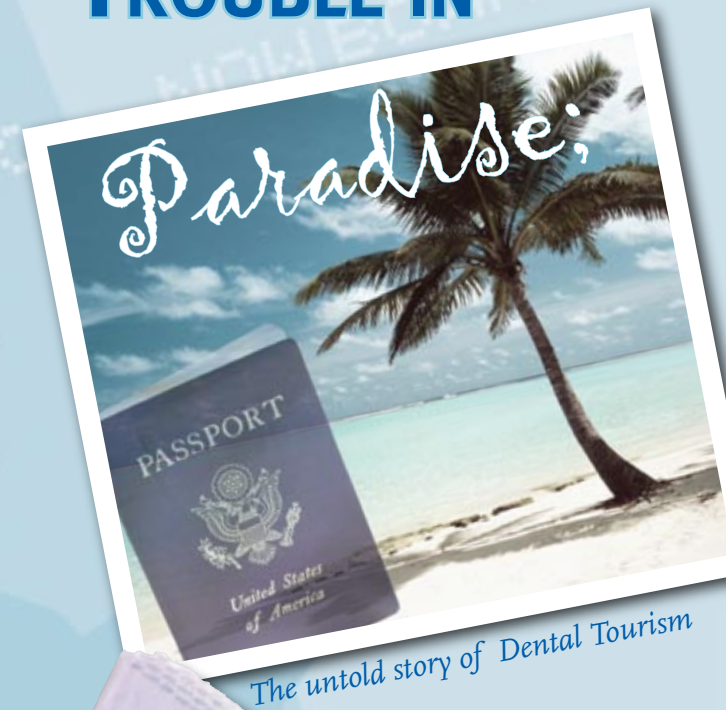
If the cost of dental care is a concern for you, there are several SAFE options to consider:

- ✓ Ask your dentist what type of payment plan options or financing he or she have available.
- ✓ If you don't have insurance, ask your dentist if he or she offers cash or senior discounts.
- ✓ Consider using one of the several community-based dental clinics around Arizona that offer reduced or free services. *Contact the Arizona Dental Association for a list at 480-344-5777 or 800-866-2732.*
- ✓ Remember, receiving quality dental care is an investment in your long-term health. The cost to repair a problem is much greater than the original investment.

If you have additional questions or concerns about dentistry in Mexico, please consult your local dentist prior to traveling across the border for dental services.

*Additional resources available at:
Academy of General Dentistry - www.agd.org
American Dental Association - www.ada.org
Arizona Dental Association - www.azda.org*

TROUBLE IN



**Dangers & Risks of
Cross-Border Dentistry;
FACTS & ISSUES**



Do dentists in Mexico comply with the same standards as dentists in the United States?

NO! Unlike Mexico, Dentistry in the U.S. has many systems in place to guarantee patients' high standards of protection. In addition to BODEX, American dentists come under the regulation and control of the Federal Government's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). These agencies require annual courses on the most current infection control techniques, materials and information. It is also required that all staff employees be inoculated for Hepatitis. While all of these regulations are expensive for a dental office, patients can rest assured their health is not being compromised.

More than 90% of U.S. dentists are vaccinated against hepatitis B compared to only 21% of Mexican dentists.

BODEX is the state agency that supervises dentists. They set mandated requirements for infection control, which are medically and scientifically based. Dentists are required to be state licensed and pay a substantial fee which is used to police themselves.

During dental treatment there is a high risk that contaminated water could enter your blood system.

Are there dangers involved with cross-border dentistry? YES! All American dental schools must be federally accredited. They offer the most highly skilled and technically advanced training, thus creating the most preeminent dental schools in the world. Quality treatment in Mexico is limited because education in Mexican dental schools is inconsistent with no uniform standards. Inferior materials that may not be FDA approved are often used on patients, greatly compromising treatment, causing failure and potential health hazards.



What about infectious diseases?

The lack of sanitary water is perilous. The explosive population especially along the border is compounding the already inadequate and overburdened infrastructure. This has led to an ever-increasing water supply polluted by untreated water with very dangerous levels of human waste. Contagious and sometimes serious life-threatening diseases such as Hepatitis, Tuberculosis and Typhoid Fever are increasing at epidemic rates along the Mexican side of our southern borders.

High incidences of diseases in third-world countries (including Mexico) are:

- Hepatitis A - transmitted through food and water.
- Hepatitis B - contracted through exposure to blood or other infectious material.
- Hepatitis C - a viral infection contracted from blood to blood contact through needles and medical exposure.
- Typhoid Fever - contracted through contact with feces, resulting in constant headaches. Has a mortality rate of 10%.
- Amebiasis - a water or food borne parasite resulting in intestinal illness which can also affect your blood, brain and spinal cord.
- Shigellosis - a bacterial infection carried through water and food polluted by feces and contracted by hand-to-hand or hand-to-mouth contact. Has a mortality rate of 20% if left untreated.
- Tuberculosis - transmitted through the air, contracted through coughing, sneezing or sputum.

Before you, a relative or a friend choose to spin the roulette wheel of health and seek dental treatment in Mexico, ask yourself this question. If you would never consider going to a hospital in Mexico for open heart surgery or to deliver a baby, why would you seek dental care in a country where you are afraid to drink the water?

