

Patients, dentists differ on smile ratings, JADA study

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People rate their smiles higher than dentists do, according to a new study. Teeth and eyes rated as the most important features of an attractive face, the study also found, and people younger than age 50 were most satisfied with their smiles.

“Dentists should be aware that patients who seek esthetic services may have different perceptions of their smiles than patients who do not express such desires,” concluded researchers.

Source: American Dental Association

The study, published in this month’s *Journal of the American Dental Association* (JADA), asked 78 patients in Norway to rate their own smiles on a 100-point satisfaction scale. Later, the patients’ regular dentist and an independent periodontist rated the patients’ smiles from photographs, using the same satisfaction scale.

According to the study, patients were more satisfied with their own smiles than dentists, rating them an average 59.1 on the 100-point scale. Dentists’ ratings of the patients’ smiles were much lower, averaging 38.6 (independent periodontist) and 40.7 (patients’ own dentist).

The researchers say that it may be difficult to understand what a smile satisfaction level of 59 really means, adding it might be more accurate to say patients are “accepting of, or contented with, their smiles.”

The study participants, who were not actively seeking cosmetic dental treatments, averaged 51 years of age (range, 22-84 years) and numbered 50 women and 28 men.

“The fact that the patients had much higher opinions of their smiles than we dentists did is interesting,” the researchers state. They explained that patients expressed their opinions from memory, while the dentists made their assessments from photographs.

Had patients used the clinicians’ detailed approach to include assessing lip lines, tooth shade, spacing, and crowding, their opinions about their smiles might have been different, the researchers speculate.

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