

1 **Salvador Gaytan:** Welcome to SmileTalk, an entertaining and informative dental talk
2 show featuring the latest news and developments in dentistry. I'm
3 Salvador Gaytan, here with...
4
5 **Dr. John Chao:** Dr. John Chao. Hi, everybody.
6
7 **Salvador Gaytan:** Dr. John, the friendly dentist, and anyone wanting to submit
8 questions can reach Dr. John at AlhambraDental.com. Now, Dr.
9 John...
10
11 **Dr. John Chao:** And you will receive a friendly answer.
12
13 **Salvador Gaytan:** A friendly answer.
14
15 **Dr. John Chao:** On the air.
16
17 **Salvador Gaytan:** You promised a friendly answer, right?
18
19 **Dr. John Chao:** Definitely friendly.
20
21 **Salvador Gaytan:** I like that, I like that, okay. Now, Dr. John, today's show, we don't
22 have a main theme, we do have a Rapid Fire Five, but we have a
23 kind of a potpourri of questions and thoughts, some questions that
24 have come in from the audience. So, we're just going to answer the
25 questions as they come about.
26
27 **Dr. John Chao:** Okay, we'll just keep talking and chatting and see where it goes.
28
29 **Salvador Gaytan:** Absolutely, absolutely and now we'll start with our Rapid Fire
30 Five, because we do have five very interesting questions and are
31 you ready, Dr. John?
32
33 **Dr. John Chao:** Let it roll.
34
35 **Salvador Gaytan:** Okay, I'm going to ask you five questions, true or false, you're
36 going to give the answer and then we'll come back to the details.
37 There are free clinics for children and or adults available at some
38 times, true or false?
39
40 **Dr. John Chao:** True.
41
42 **Salvador Gaytan:** That is true, okay. Question number two. X-rays are required for
43 every procedure that a dentist performs, true or false?
44
45 **Dr. John Chao:** False.
46

47 **Salvador Gaytan:** Okay, question number three, Dr. John. Implants are like real teeth,
48 true or false?
49

50 **Dr. John Chao:** False.
51

52 **Salvador Gaytan:** False, okay. Question number four, a dental bridge can cost just as
53 much as an implant, true or false?
54

55 **Dr. John Chao:** True.
56

57 **Salvador Gaytan:** True. Question number five, Dr. John: All implants are the same,
58 true or false?
59

60 **Dr. John Chao:** False.
61

62 **Salvador Gaytan:** False, okay. Let's go back to our first question, which is regarding
63 free dental clinics. There are some free dental clinics available for
64 children and adults. That is true, isn't it?
65

66 **Dr. John Chao:** Yes, there are some, they are stretched to their capacity probably
67 by now, because some of the programs that the state sponsors have
68 been cut out, but there are some facilities. You have to look on the
69 web to find them, they are available.
70

71 The one that comes to mind would be the county general hospital,
72 which has an oral surgery department that I have known to be
73 doing oral surgery at no charge to the public.
74

75 In fact, our dental students generally rotate through that particular
76 department. So, I know that it's been available to the general
77 public.
78

79 **Salvador Gaytan:** Now, what would they perform there? What services would be
80 available?
81

82 **Dr. John Chao:** Basically extractions.
83

84 **Salvador Gaytan:** Extractions?
85

86 **Dr. John Chao:** Teeth removal. Now, there are other charitable facilities that
87 specialize in performing dentistry for children who otherwise
88 cannot get dentistry. That I think is so important and so critical. I
89 just -- it breaks my heart to see children suffer pain and suffer from
90 infections that are not being treated.
91

92 So, I give my full support to those foundations that treat children,
93 and they deserve our support and certainly our donation whenever
94 possible.
95
96 So, they are available, you can find them. You can find them on
97 the net, in the yellow pages. There is a -- in particular I know of
98 one. It's called the St. Gabriel Valley Dental Foundation. So, if
99 you have children, who need help, find them out and see if you can
100 call them and get your children in there to take care of them.
101
102 **Salvador Gaytan:** Because if you don't have the funds to pay for dentistry, then that's
103 one option that people can investigate for the children.
104
105 **Dr. John Chao:** Absolutely, and if you have a dentist already, sit down and discuss
106 with your dentist. It's amazing how much dentistry is done by
107 individual dentists for patients in need. It's much more than what
108 anybody would suspect. There have been some surveys.
109
110 It's just a tremendous amount. Dentists are very compassionate
111 people, and they will do special things for their patients when the
112 situation is called for, especially as to children. So, don't hesitate
113 to talk to your dentist if your children need some special help. It's
114 something that I just couldn't turn down myself, neither would my
115 colleagues be able to do that.
116
117 We do a lot, we do a lot, and it's just not being publicized. I think
118 dentists are a compassionate bunch of people and they do a lot of
119 this, so don't forget to check with individual dentists as to what
120 they can do for your child if your child is suffering from
121 toothaches and infections.
122
123 **Salvador Gaytan:** Excellent. Okay, Dr. John, question number two of our Rapid Fire
124 Five: X-rays are required for every procedure that a dentist
125 performs, that is false, isn't it?
126
127 **Dr. John Chao:** There are some procedures that can be done without x-rays, but
128 generally though most things that the dentist do, requires an x-ray,
129 because things can go wrong if you don't have an x-ray. But there
130 are certain things such as, you can clean somebody's teeth, I
131 suppose, without an x-ray if it looks generally healthy.
132
133 Let's say you find somebody who is 15, 16 years old and looks
134 pretty cavity clean, you can clean the teeth without that. Certain
135 other procedures that are done, such as the bleaching of
136 somebody's teeth, if the teeth look pretty healthy to you as a
137 dentist, but there could be problems with that too. So, generally

138 speaking, I would say x-rays are a good idea, certain times we will
139 make an exception.
140
141 **Salvador Gaytan:** Well, now you can -- I mean to do any procedure that requires
142 implant, extraction, things of that nature, you have to have a
143 current set of x-rays, don't you?
144
145 **Dr. John Chao:** Yeah, anything that's invasive, of course. You better have an x-
146 ray, because you may find something that you don't expect to see
147 and it's amazing how many times we can be fooled just by the
148 superficial appearance of the teeth and miss something if we don't
149 take x-rays.
150
151 **Salvador Gaytan:** In your office, how often do you require x-rays to be updated? If
152 someone's been there 10 years, how many sets of x-rays do you
153 normally expect to see in the file over time?
154
155 **Dr. John Chao:** I don't have any set rules as to when I'll take a full set of x-rays if
156 a patient's condition is quite healthy. I don't notice any changes. It
157 could be many years before I will recommend a new set.
158
159 Generally, I have to see some changes before I would offer a new
160 set of x-rays for the patient, but I would occasionally say, "Well,
161 you need probably one x-ray here and one x-ray there, just so that
162 we can make sure that nothing unusual is happening." We're pretty
163 judicious in the way that we offer x-rays as with all my colleagues.
164
165 **Salvador Gaytan:** Because isn't it true though that someone can have no pain in their
166 mouth, they think everything's fine, but then you may take a set of
167 x-rays and you see something brewing inside the tooth. Is that
168 true?
169
170 **Dr. John Chao:** That's true, more often than what I like to see. Just this morning,
171 for instance, we saw somebody who had x-rays done not too long
172 ago, but she complains of pain in over upper right front tooth, and
173 our regular x-rays didn't show it.
174
175 We finally decided to take a 3D x-ray and there was an abscess
176 there the 2D x-ray didn't show. So, x-rays are very important,
177 especially when we have symptoms that we cannot explain.
178
179 **Salvador Gaytan:** Now, we've talked about that you have obviously the standard 2D
180 x-ray, but in your office you also have 3D x-ray, not all offices
181 have that, but you have that and that gives you an extra dimension
182 to look 360 around each tooth, doesn't it?
183

184 **Dr. John Chao:** And go inside the tooth.
185
186 **Salvador Gaytan:** Inside.
187
188 **Dr. John Chao:** We can actually walk inside the tooth that has a crown and be able
189 to see the internal structure of the tooth, and I believe this is the
190 coming thing, that over a number of years more and more dentists
191 will make use of 3D x-rays, because it's just so diagnostic and so
192 helpful to the patients.
193
194 I think, it's just the beginning of a curve when most dentists will
195 end up having CT scans. Hopefully, over the years, CT scans will
196 become less expensive and more affordable for dental offices to be
197 able to buy them and use them on a routine basis.
198
199 **Salvador Gaytan:** Absolutely. Okay, Dr. John, question number three: Implants are
200 just like real teeth. That is...?
201
202 **Dr. John Chao:** That's false. Implants are somewhat like real teeth.
203
204 **Salvador Gaytan:** Okay, somewhat like real teeth.
205
206 **Dr. John Chao:** Somewhat like real teeth. Implants don't have the same feel. For
207 instance, real teeth, you can feel hot and cold with real teeth. You
208 cannot feel temperature changes with implants. Implants are
209 locked into the bone, whereas teeth have a connective tissue sack
210 that holds the tooth in the bone structure. So, it's got some gift.
211
212 Although you do have to take care of your implants as well as you
213 take care of your teeth, but certain things can cause implants to
214 break down, whereas teeth are not as vulnerable.
215
216 So, implants have to be really taken care of, really well, and they
217 have to be done really, really well for them to last a long time. So,
218 you don't have the same feel to the implants and implants are
219 different, because they are artificial.
220
221 **Salvador Gaytan:** Now, how long would a good set of implants last, in your
222 estimation, with good care?
223
224 **Dr. John Chao:** Well, there have been studies done under very stringent conditions.
225 These studies show that implants can last 25 years or more and
226 90% of the time, but these are done well. These are not done
227 helter-skelter, at a fast rate, and not following very stringent
228 protocol.
229

230 So, therefore when implants are done correctly according to certain
231 standards, then they are expected to last a long time, but when they
232 are not, and I'm sorry to say that sometimes they're not, then they
233 don't tend to last that implants done in the past have lasted.
234

235 **Salvador Gaytan:** So, if somebody wanted to do quantity implants, how would they
236 not follow a protocol, as you say?
237

238 **Dr. John Chao:** Well, there could be any number of ways to do implant dentistry
239 and still be up to a certain minimum standard. If you do it up to a
240 minimum standard and that's all that you can afford, you can have
241 it done under those conditions, but you have to remember, under
242 those conditions, the implants may not last as long.
243

244 You may have a higher risk of complications, so that's needed to
245 be taken into account when you do the implants or any other dental
246 procedure at the minimum level of quality. It doesn't mean it's
247 wrong, it doesn't mean it's right, that's just the preference of the
248 patient given the benefits and the risks.
249

250 **Salvador Gaytan:** So, there's going to be some correlation. If someone shops around,
251 and they find implants for one price and there's another price a
252 thousand dollars more, there may be a quality issue there.
253

254 **Dr. John Chao:** There may be. Again, it's like what I explained before. There's a
255 spectrum, quality on one end, absolute quality, and on the other
256 end, absolute quantity. Somewhere along the line, each practice
257 would place itself.
258

259 So, it's not right, it's not wrong. However, just because the implant
260 is the cheapest, it doesn't mean it's not the best, and just because
261 an implant is very expensive, it doesn't mean that's the best either.
262

263 **Salvador Gaytan:** Right.
264

265 **Dr. John Chao:** It depends on the situation, it depends on the doctor, it depends on
266 what the patient needs. So, it's a little bit more complex, but if you
267 think in terms of quality and quantity on a spectrum, then you can
268 understand why there are so much differences in terms of the cost
269 of putting implants in.
270

271 **Salvador Gaytan:** Excellent, okay, question number four. A bridge, a dental bridge
272 can cost just as much as an implant. That is true?
273

274 **Dr. John Chao:** That's true or vice versa an implant can cost just as much as a
275 bridge.

276

277 *Salvador Gaytan:* So, why do a bridge?

278

279 *Dr. John Chao:* That's a good question, it depends on the situation. Now,
280 especially, let's say you've lost a tooth between two front teeth.
281 You've lost a front tooth. Now, you're considering whether you
282 should put an implant or a bridge.

283

284 A bridge is a dental appliance, so to speak, that is anchored on two
285 other teeth with a false tooth in the middle, and generally these are
286 three caps connected together with one false tooth in the middle,
287 okay. That would be a bridge.

288

289 Now, if you're missing a front tooth, the neighboring teeth, the
290 tooth on the left and the tooth on the right are totally uncut,
291 wholesome teeth. If you make a bridge, you have to cut those two
292 teeth down, so that they can fit crowns on them. In that particular
293 situation, you would want to consider an implant.

294

295 An implant may be better in the sense that you don't have to cut
296 those teeth down. An implant may be better, because the cost is
297 about the same. Now, because if you have two teeth already that
298 had been capped, and they are in need of new crowns, then in that
299 point in time, you might consider having a bridge done.

300

301 *Salvador Gaytan:* Right.

302

303 *Dr. John Chao:* Because you have to cap those two crowns -- redo those two
304 crowns anyway. So, if you put a bridge in, it actually will cost you
305 less than an implant cost wise, but it may be that you should have
306 two separate crowns done and put an implant in, because having an
307 implant would mean that the missing tooth will be replaced by an
308 implant tooth.

309

310 *Salvador Gaytan:* Is an implant tooth stronger than a bridge?

311

312 *Dr. John Chao:* The implant tooth should be about the same if it's done right,
313 okay? An implant will never do something that a natural tooth can.

314

315 *Salvador Gaytan:* Yeah.

316

317 *Dr. John Chao:* An implant tooth will never decay. You don't have to worry about
318 cavities on an implant tooth.

319

320 *Salvador Gaytan:* Oh, well, some people will like that, all right.

321

322 **Dr. John Chao:** You can have gum disease around an implant. You can lose an
323 implant as a result of gum disease or infection, but in that sense the
324 implant will last just as long as a bridge, probably longer, probably
325 longer, because crowns do breakdown.
326

327 **Salvador Gaytan:** I see.
328

329 **Dr. John Chao:** Decay can start around crowns, so, crowns -- the lifetime of a
330 crown depends on how it's done and how the patient takes care of
331 it.
332

333 **Salvador Gaytan:** I see.
334

335 **Dr. John Chao:** So, over the long term, maybe to answer your question, an implant
336 may last longer. So, now not every implant situation is the same.
337 Sometimes, you cannot put an implant in. I have a patient right
338 now, he's got an embedded eye tooth just underneath where she's
339 lost a tooth.
340

341 **Salvador Gaytan:** What's an eye tooth?
342

343 **Dr. John Chao:** It's called cuspid. It's the teeth that the vampires have which are
344 real long.
345

346 **Salvador Gaytan:** Right.
347

348 **Dr. John Chao:** Okay. It's just on the side of your face underneath the nose. She
349 happened to have that tooth embedded, lying horizontally, under
350 the gum.
351

352 **Salvador Gaytan:** Wow.
353

354 **Dr. John Chao:** You cannot put an implant there. This is a patient who will have to
355 wear a denture with a tooth or she's going to have to have a bridge.
356

357 **Salvador Gaytan:** Could you extract that tooth, that's embedded in the gum line?
358

359 **Dr. John Chao:** It's possible, but it will involve so much havoc, you might end up
360 having to cut some of the good teeth and cause them to have root
361 canals. It's a major, major event.
362

363 **Salvador Gaytan:** Is that an uncommon situation for someone to have that?
364

365 **Dr. John Chao:** That's an uncommon event. However, the common events where,
366 because the tooth has been extracted, so much gum and the bone is
367 gone, if you were to put an implant in there, you'd have a real long

368 tooth. So, you have to build up the bone, build up the gum, and that
369 can make it a very expensive affair.

370
371 So, maybe the patient should have a removable appliance, that will
372 look natural or have a bridge done that can -- where the part of the
373 bridge is made to look like gum.

374
375 **Salvador Gaytan:** Yeah.

376
377 **Dr. John Chao:** So, you have a long space that can be filled in, but what looks like
378 gum and but what looks like tooth.

379
380 **Salvador Gaytan:** Wow.

381
382 **Dr. John Chao:** Even though it's actually a bridged tooth or a pontic. So, there are
383 different ways to do things. So, there's no definite answer for
384 everything that can go wrong in the mouth, but generally speaking
385 an implant can replace a missing tooth and have it cost almost as
386 much, or maybe a little bit more or a little bit less than what a
387 bridge would cost.

388
389 **Salvador Gaytan:** So, you mentioned a number of different situations that a dentist
390 might have to consider, the different situations like that with
391 implants, bridges. So, I take it that someone really wants to find a
392 dentist who is skilled at knowing how to do those things. Isn't that
393 right?

394
395 **Dr. John Chao:** Yes, you need to find somebody -- not every dentist can do
396 implants, not every dentist wants to do implants, and there are
397 certain dentists who don't want to surgically put the implants in,
398 they would rather leave it up to the specialist, the oral surgeon or
399 the periodontist or any number of general dentists who surgically
400 put implants in.

401
402 They'd rather have those people put the implants in and they take
403 over after the implants are ready for the restorative part or the
404 crown part, and there are dentists who do the surgery as well as
405 restore the implant with crowns. They are different.

406
407 **Salvador Gaytan:** In your practice, do you do everything, from A to Z?

408
409 **Dr. John Chao:** I'm like certain dentists who likes to do everything from beginning
410 to the end, because I like to take responsibility for the whole thing
411 and be able to plan it from beginning to end and not leave anything
412 to chance.

413

414 But that doesn't mean that other dentists who work with surgeons
415 don't do just as well. It depends on how they communicate and
416 they can concentrate on the restorative part, but to answer your
417 question, there are different considerations when you do implants,
418 because I do the surgical part and the restorative part. I am more --
419 have the responsibility of really determining what the bony
420 foundation is like.
421
422 **Salvador Gaytan:** I see.
423
424 **Dr. John Chao:** Not every implant can be the same, just because the bone structure
425 could be different. Like this morning, I had a gentleman whose
426 bone is quite weak based on the CAT scan, and I recommended
427 that he gets a bone density test.
428
429 His situation will be very complex to restore, and not that we
430 cannot do it, but we have to take certain precautions and make sure
431 that any kind of implants we'd put in are going to work for him,
432 and put it in such a way that it's going to hold and last.
433
434 So, you have to worry about the kind of bone you have, how much
435 bone you have. You have to find out where the nerves are, where
436 the arteries are, where the sinuses are before you can plan
437 something out.
438
439 **Salvador Gaytan:** Excellent.
440
441 **Dr. John Chao:** So, there's a lot of consideration to do an implant, and also as
442 we've talked before, how is it going to look especially around the
443 front teeth? So, you cannot have gums that recede, that have a
444 black mark around the smile where the implant is. So, there are
445 different considerations, and so it's a very complex situation that
446 doesn't lend itself to simple answers.
447
448 **Salvador Gaytan:** Yes. Okay, question number five, our last question. We kind of
449 touched a little bit on it. All implants are the same. That is not true.
450
451 **Dr. John Chao:** Well, all implants are the same in the sense they are implants, but
452 there are different kinds of implants. There are literally hundreds
453 of implants on the market with different strong points and different
454 liabilities.
455
456 So, the dentist has to make a decision as to which implant should
457 go into which situation. So, you cannot use one implant for every
458 situation, because it's just not going to work.
459

460 **Salvador Gaytan:** Now, there's a new type of implant we talked a little bit about,
461 called Snap-Ons, is that right?
462

463 **Dr. John Chao:** That's actually a veneer type of...
464

465 **Salvador Gaytan:** It's a veneer?
466

467 **Dr. John Chao:** It's a Snap-On veneer, but there are simple implants for certain
468 situations such as for dentures. For dentures, we use some very
469 small implants like surgical screws. You don't need to cut the gum
470 for that and there are a small number of selections, because the use
471 is limited.
472

473 Even then you have different kinds of sizes and different lengths
474 that you use, depending on what you are going to use it for. So,
475 there are different kinds depending on the application.
476

477 **Salvador Gaytan:** Excellent. That finishes our Rapid Fire Five, Dr. John. We only
478 have a few more minutes left, but let's just talk. Times are tough
479 and people are hurting and there's less money to be spent. Are
480 there any money saving tips that you can give people to take care
481 of their teeth?
482

483 **Dr. John Chao:** Yes, take care of their teeth and take care of their cosmetic needs.
484 You brought up Snap-On. Snap-On Smile is actually a cost saving
485 way of having a great smile without paying for thousands upon
486 thousands of dollars of veneer or crown work.
487

488 Let's say if you're missing a front tooth or your teeth don't look so
489 good and you've got to make a good appearance to even get a job
490 or keep the job that you have or be competitive in the job that you
491 have.
492

493 You can actually have what's called a Snap-On Smile that just
494 calls for the dentist to take some impressions of your teeth and
495 order a set of veneers for you. Veneers are tiny little porcelain
496 shells, and these shells would go over your front teeth instead of
497 being glued onto your teeth permanently, it's something that snaps
498 on like a mouth guard.
499

500 **Salvador Gaytan:** Where does it snap to?
501

502 **Dr. John Chao:** It snaps to just the teeth you have.
503

504 **Salvador Gaytan:** Really?
505

506 **Dr. John Chao:** Just all around. Just the teeth you have, as big as your smile would
507 be and it doesn't touch the gum and it can look terrific. It looks
508 natural. I've made a set for myself to demonstrate to patients and
509 you can hardly tell.
510
511 **Salvador Gaytan:** You've made a set for yourself?
512
513 **Dr. John Chao:** Yeah, it looks pretty good. It's a little longer than my present teeth.
514 It gives me a little support to my lip, so all the ladies in my office
515 actually like it.
516
517 **Salvador Gaytan:** Really?
518
519 **Dr. John Chao:** Yeah, they think I don't look bad with it at all, it's just a different
520 look. So, that is a cost saving way and time saving way to get
521 something that you can wear for a period of time. It may last a year
522 or two or three years.
523
524 **Salvador Gaytan:** Can you eat with them on?
525
526 **Dr. John Chao:** You can definitely eat with them on. We also use them as a
527 preliminary step to reconstructing the whole mouth. This way you
528 get the smile you want and we can kind of work with it and
529 eventually when you can afford to do so, then we can put a whole
530 set of veneers or crowns on your teeth.
531
532 **Salvador Gaytan:** So, if someone comes in your office on the first of the month, how
533 long does it take to get a set of Snap-Ons?
534
535 **Dr. John Chao:** Right now, it's taking the manufacturer, the inventor of this
536 particular technique about three weeks.
537
538 **Salvador Gaytan:** Three weeks.
539
540 **Dr. John Chao:** Three weeks from beginning to end. So, it's totally painless, you
541 don't have give a shot, you don't have to touch the tooth, you take
542 an impression and it's done in three weeks.
543
544 **Salvador Gaytan:** So, someone could even have Snap-Ons even if they were missing
545 three, four teeth or had crooked teeth, they could put some Snap-
546 Ons and they'd have a perfect smile.
547
548 **Dr. John Chao:** Exactly. The caveat is, you can't have a tooth that sticks out
549 already, because then the Snap-On would make it come out even a
550 little bit more.
551

552 **Salvador Gaytan:** I see.
553
554 **Dr. John Chao:** If the teeth are tucked in somewhat, that would be a wonderful way
555 to improve your smile without spending on that much money.
556
557 **Salvador Gaytan:** Excellent, excellent.
558
559 **Dr. John Chao:** Talking about how you can save money. You can save money in
560 terms of cavities by using fluoride, a fluoride toothpaste. You can
561 get a prescription for fluoride rinses and these prescriptions that
562 your dentist can give you, will allow you to go to the pharmacy
563 and get fluoride under your medical insurance.
564
565 So, it could cost you maybe just \$5 or \$2, whatever they happened
566 to charge per prescription. So, you can get all the fluoride you
567 want, and use fluoride on your teeth. There are studies that show
568 that if you use fluoride in the ideal amount, in the way that it's
569 prescribed, you can actually stop cavities when they are not too
570 deep.
571
572 **Salvador Gaytan:** Fantastic.
573
574 **Dr. John Chao:** Some studies have shown that decay actually reverses and the
575 cavities actually harden.
576
577 **Salvador Gaytan:** Wow.
578
579 **Dr. John Chao:** So you don't have to fill them. So, if you use fluoride diligently
580 according to instructions, then there is a chance you can save
581 yourself so much expenses, especially in these times. I need not
582 say it again, it's getting old. Brush your teeth and floss your teeth.
583
584 **Salvador Gaytan:** Excellent.
585
586 **Dr. John Chao:** That can save you so much money.
587
588 **Salvador Gaytan:** Okay. It comes to the conclusion of our show, Dr. John. We'll talk
589 to you next weekend.
590
591 [END OF AUDIO]