

## **An Orthodontist Defined – More than Just Braces**

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We all know what an orthodontist is right? It's the person that puts braces on teenagers! Well, that's not wrong but it really short-changes this awesome specialty of dentistry. It would be like saying your smart phone lets you make phone calls – we all know it does so much more! So, think of us the same way – not only do we fix teenagers' crooked teeth with braces but we also:

- monitor and modify growth to become more favorable in the growing patient,
- create space for blocked out and crowded teeth,
- eliminate the difficulty in cleaning rotated or mal-positioned teeth via straightening them thus decreasing chances of periodontal disease,
- eliminate pain or discomfort from malocclusions or “bad bites,”
- provide non-invasive approaches to TMJ discomfort,
- and so much more, it's hard to list everything!

Plus, we do all of this with the latest and greatest techniques, using all modalities at our disposal – think braces (and the many types of braces that are case specific) vs clear aligners/Invisalign vs expanders, etc.

But how did we get here? How are we able to do all of these things? It all starts from our complex training which led to private practice, and it's quite a journey. Let's take a stroll for some better understanding. You never know, your child may want to explore this career path, or at the very least you will soon understand how we came to provide this high level of care. Let's get to know your neighborhood orthodontists at Bancroft Dobrin Orthodontics.

Skipping right to high school graduation, the first meaningful degree, we then explore college and the process of attaining a bachelor's degree. College includes all of the necessary pre-requisites required by dental schools, especially the science classes, to prepare for a future in dental medicine. Depending on how long it takes to get that degree (in most cases four years), you must then take the dental school entrance exams and score well enough to compliment your college GPA to get accepted into dental school. Fast forward to dental school, typically four years with didactic courses (classroom training), as well as clinical training. Believe it or not, dental school consists of the exact same courses taken by medical students except we have to simultaneously train on fake teeth for hours upon hours per day for two years at the same time as studying for our classes! The other two years of dental school included courses being taken daily but working on live patients for the majority of the day, perfecting our craft, and completing our clinical requirements while proving proficiency. Needless to say, dental school was a long four years.

Upon completion of dental school, you are a declared a dentist! However, some states like New York require a one-year residency in order to practice as a dentist. This means working on patients for another year in a hospital or clinical setting under the guidance of multiple dentists.

All three of us completed one of these programs, a “General Practice Residency” or GPR following dental school to advance our training – Hackensack University Hospital (Dr. Bancroft and Dr. Ashley) and New York Presbyterian Hospital Weill-Cornell (me). After that, in order for a dentist to become a specialist such as an orthodontist, oral surgeon, pediatric dentist, etc., they must continue on for post-graduate training at an accredited program that offers their desired specialty. This is a very selective process as only a handful of applicants are accepted each year into these programs. The training is rigorous and prepares the former dentist for their specific craft, in our case, orthodontics. We train utilizing all of the current technologies including specialized braces, clear aligners/Invisalign, growth modification and interceptive treatment including expanders, surgical treatment in conjunction with actual jaw surgeries, and the intricacies of treating patients from a macro perspective taking into consideration all areas of dentistry. What I mean by that is we obviously still know what a cavity is, can identify active disease and what needs to be treated by our dentist colleagues, diagnose periodontal disease (gum and/or bone loss) and refer to a periodontist when a patient must be treated, and so on.

Upon completion of an accredited program, we are then declared a specialist and practice within our scope of orthodontics. I decided to pursue my board certification and completed all of the components required to be declared an American Board of Orthodontics (ABO) Board-Certified Orthodontist, the pinnacle of our specialty. It is not a requirement to practice orthodontics but it is a prestigious degree to earn.

What I hope to reinforce with this article is the importance of understanding who is treating you and/or your children and the extent of their training in what they are offering. When you seek out a professional for braces, make sure you are considering orthodontists as we are specially trained in working with braces. And as we all know, at the very least, Orthodontist = Braces! When considering clear aligners or Invisalign, we as orthodontists specifically train in orthodontic tooth movement which is exactly what Invisalign is doing – moving teeth safely through bone to a more ideal position; same as braces, just with a different type of material. Dentists on occasion will offer treatment with aligners and they often tend to be pretty straightforward cases as long as the dentist has the experience, but when it gets complicated it is highly important to see an orthodontist for treatment. Any growth modification or interceptive treatment needed? Our degrees literally show *Advanced Education in Orthodontics and Dentofacial Orthopedics*. See an orthodontist for these treatments.

I hope you liked our educational journey and have a better understanding of what an orthodontist is trained to do. Come see us at Bancroft Dobrin Orthodontics for a complimentary consultation, we do more than just braces!