

The complete structure and function of teeth are crucial to oral health as well as overall health. Infections, missing teeth, and other factors threaten this and must be treated effectively. Treatment decisions depend on the severity of the damage, the patient's insurance and financial situation, and the overall access to care. The impact of these factors on decision-making by the patient and the provider can significantly influence the patient's health and quality of life. Providing appropriate treatment is paramount to successful long-term patient outcomes. I observed the treatment of patients with teeth requiring major restorations at a local dental clinic for six weeks. I then conducted a review of literary sources on dental implants and root canals and compared their findings to my observations. Although root canals and dental implants are generally successful procedures, dental implants showed a very high success rate of greater than 90%. In contrast, endodontic procedures had more variable success rates, between 75.2% and 93%. With that, dental implants are more expensive and less often covered by insurance than root canal procedures. Comparing this to the observational experience, dental implants were cheaper and showed a 100% success rate. No endodontic procedures were observed. The synthesis of direct patient observation with the literature review highlights dental implants as best practice for significant tooth restoration, assuming they are accessible and affordable to the patients. Developing a better understanding of the factors that affect the decision-making for tooth restoration will ultimately lead to optimal treatment outcomes.