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Responsive Essay:

Prior to enrolling in the dental hygiene program, it was a concern of mine that I would be exposing myself to radiation throughout the entirety of my career. I was not fearful of radiation but my concern was geared towards the cumulative effects of radiation over the years and how it would negatively affect my body. Now that I am in the program and we have learned about radiation as well as the many safety precautions that are followed to ensure clinician and patient safety, I no longer have this apprehension. There have been many advancements made to continuously reduce radiation exposure to the point where the amount of radiation we are being exposed to is close to none. We would be exposed to much more radiation on a plane trip than a dental office and in our everyday lives, we are constantly exposed to radiation from both man-made and natural sources. This is something that many patients are not aware of. For starters, they do not understand the importance of dental x-rays and this encourages the mindset that it is therefore unnecessary and could be omitted.

After reading the article, "Refusing Dental Radiographs" by Dianne Watterson, I was shocked to learn that if a patient refuses dental x-rays we could still be held liable if we failed to diagnose something. This is interesting because it furthermore shows how important dental x-rays are. Patients can refuse dental radiographs for reasons other than fear such as religion, discomfort, and having prior exposure to radiation by means of radiotherapy. However, when a patient signs an informed refusal for whatever reason, they are essentially giving permission to having care that is below standard. This is something that I would explain to my patients. Many things can go unnoticed when radiographs are omitted and many of these detrimental conditions can be detected early with radiographs. If we wait till they can be observed clinically, it will then be too late. Radiographs are the third eye of the clinician and we cannot detect or diagnose a wide variety of conditions without this key piece of information. I would also use the analogy of being asked to look for something blindfolded to emphasize how ridiculous it is to refuse radiographs. To reduce the fear, I would explain to the patient that the amount of radiation they are being exposed to is very minimal especially with the implementation of the lead apron, lead collimator, and long PID. These are all features that were well thought of to ensure the patient is being exposed to radiation as low as reasonably achievable (ALARA). Lastly, I would add that the implementation of sensors further decreases their radiation exposure because it requires less time to capture the image. I would stress that the benefits far outweigh the risks and everything we do follows policies and procedures that ensure utmost care.