

## Different Stories

Chiodo and Tolle

Following graduation from dental school, you associate in a general dental practice in a town which is the capital of the state. The owner-dentist has far more patients than he wishes. He is slowly retiring and he wants to give you some of his patients while he cuts down on his time.

Shortly after starting practice in this office, a 37 year old woman comes to you for dental treatment. This young lady is the wife of the governor's chief legal counsel. She presents today for emergency treatment of a subluxed and fractured tooth #9. Your examination reveals a midroot fracture and a lingual displacement of approximately 3 mm. The same radiograph shows a previously devitalized tooth #8 and possibly #7. Neither of these teeth has received endodontic treatment. In addition to her oral injuries, the patient has facial injuries consisting of a black eye on the right side and small contusion over her left eyebrow. There is also a small bruise under her chin. Her explanation for these injuries is given quite freely. She tells you that it occurred when she was chasing their three year old son who was running toward the stairs. As she ran after him, she tripped and fell, hitting her face against the edge of the stair step.

You treat her injuries and discuss childrearing anecdotes. Following her dismissal, you discuss this patient and her injuries with your associate. He tells you that she has been in several times before with fractured teeth, bruises about her face and neck. One time she had a broken finger. The last time he saw her, she had a patch of hair missing. She usually has a somewhat believable explanation for these injuries. However, on occasion he has known her to give an explanation to the receptionist and a slightly different version of the explanation to him.

You question your receptionist as to the explanation she received from this patient regarding her current injuries. The receptionist tells you that she explained the injuries as having occurred when she fell from a stepladder while placing wallpaper. You make entries in the patient's chart that include these two explanations that are at variance.

Two days later this same patient is back in your office. This time she has been sent there from the emergency room of the hospital. Her right arm is in a cast and she tells you that it has been fractured. Teeth #8 and #9 have been forced lingually to the extent that the patient can no longer close her teeth together. The radiograph shows an alveolar fracture one each side of #8 and #9, and on examination both teeth and the alveolar fragment are mobile together. The patient has new bruises on her face and neck and her right ear lobe has a tear in it as well. The patient tells you that she tripped while going downstairs and rolled down the stairs.

Student #1 Construct a defense for reporting this case to the sheriff's office as domestic violence and placing this woman in contact with a support group for battered women.

Student #2 Construct a defense for treating this woman's oral injuries and doing nothing further.