



Warning over quick-fix teeth straightening

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PEOPLE who want to straighten their teeth are being warned about the country-wide growth in "six-month smile" clinics which offer quick-fix treatments.

The treatment, which costs around €2,500 from dentists, will only work for a small number of patients, leaving others disappointed and forced to seek specialist care.

The warning is issued today by the **Orthodontic Society of Ireland**, which represents orthodontists who are specialists in corrective dentistry after spending three years training to straighten teeth and deal with jaw problems.

The organisation's president, Dr **Katherine Condren**, an **orthodontist** in Terenure, Dublin, said the "six-month smile" promotion is not suit-

able for the vast majority of people who want their teeth straightened. In order to get proper results, the standard treatment should last a year to 18 months, she advised.

"Dentists are entitled to offer the treatment but they may have done just a weekend or day course. They are not specialists. We have trained for three years after becoming dentists and **orthodontics** is all we do every day."

Stable

Orthodontists say they are seeing patients who come to them because they were dissatisfied with the results of the six-month treatment in dental clinics.

"They usually only align the front teeth and do not provide a stable bite. We have the expertise to recognise the difference and can give people

straight teeth in harmony with their face to last a lifetime," said Dr Condren.

She said the prices charged by **orthodontists** can be cheaper than those at the dentists and they can range from €2,000 for a short easy course to around €5,000 for patients who need advanced care such as train-track braces to correct their jaw. Most offer easy-payment plans.

Asked to comment on the warning, Fintan Hourihan of the Irish Dental Association, representing dentists, said: "All dentists are entitled to provide **orthodontic** care and should only practise within their competence and experience.

"It would be expected that they refer on complex cases to **orthodontists**. I am not aware of any instances where they are not referring them on."

Meanwhile, the orthodon-

lists, as part of their awareness campaign, are also highlighting the ongoing delays faced by thousands of children who need **orthodontic** treatment but who are waiting up to four years.

The delays mean some children with very prominent teeth or misaligned jaws are missing out on the ideal time to treat the problem during their developing teenage years. They suffer embarrassment as well as the risk in some cases of having to undergo corrective surgery when they are older.

Waiting times around the country vary and can range from three to four years in Co Meath to two to three years in Co Louth and Co Monaghan for relatively urgent cases.

The HSE is refusing to treat children with very crowded teeth, saying they are not a priority and leaving them on an indefinite waiting list.