Asia Pacific region sees significant shift in attitudes towards braces

By DI

HONG KONG/PHNOM PENH, Cambodia/SYDNEY, Australia: From the thriving fake braces business in South East Asian countries such as Thailand, Indonesia and Cambodia to Australian children being disappointed when being told they do not need braces—in the last decade, attitudes towards orthodontic treatment have seen an incredible shift in the Asia-Pacific region from being a hardship of adolescence to making a fashion statement.

Whether because of advances in technology that have made today’s fixed orthodontic appliances smaller and more comfortable than ever or the vast array of colours orthodontic brackets and components are available in, dental braces are enjoying surprising popularity as a fashion craze in parts of Asia. The phenomenon of fashion braces serve no medical purpose first appeared in Thailand in 2006. From there, the trend quickly spread to neighbouring countries Indonesia, Malaysia and, most recently, Cambodia. As reported by the Phnom Penh Post, fake braces are easily available online and through local suppliers in these countries, with material kits starting from as low as US$20 (£17.90).

After purchasing the necessary components, customers are referred to local dentists for impressions and attachments. However, even if the braces are fitted by a trained professional—which is not always the case, seeing as many dentists are simply refusers without regular adjustment or check-ups—braces are enjoying surprising popularity as a fashion craze...

Aussie kids excited about fixed orthodontic appliances

Further to the south, in Australia, braces may not be considered a fashion statement yet; however, attitudes towards orthodontic treatment have shifted similarly over the past several years. A recent study conducted by the Australian Society of Orthodontists has found that seven in ten children responded with happiness or excitement upon hearing that they needed treatment with fixed orthodontic appliances. Moreover, nine in ten of the specialist orthodontists surveyed said that they had witnessed a child become visibly upset when told he or she did not need such treatment.

According to society spokesperson and practising orthodontist Dr. David Mastroianni, these findings reflect patients’ shifting attitudes in Australia. “The industry has observed a shift in attitudes towards braces and orthodontic treatment first hand. We now have children coming in for consultations, not because they’ve been referred by their dentist, but because the child wants braces,” he remarked. “With advances in technology it is the role of the orthodontist to determine the best course of action, if any, required.”

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