

Ethical Considerations in Preemptive Wisdom Tooth Extraction

The practice of preemptive wisdom teeth surgical removals, justified by clinicians who routinely carry out this procedure as both prophylactic and preventive, continue to raise legitimate *Standard of Practice* and *ethical* questions. The assumption that impacted wisdom teeth ultimately become symptomatic and/or pathologic has not been supported by credible studies. On the contrary, numerous studies indicate that the overwhelming majority of asymptomatic, non-pathologic impacted wisdom teeth remain symptom- and pathology-free for the patient's life. Yet, the attendant significant risks and post-operative complications associated with impacted wisdom teeth extractions are often real. This presentation discusses the *Standard of Care* and *Ethical* concerns raised by the practice of extracting asymptomatic and non-pathological wisdom teeth against the background of short- and long-term complications, cost-effectiveness, and risk-benefit analyses for the patient. An attempt has therefore been made to highlight the ethical issues implicated by this practice. Guidelines for streamlining ethical issues that are raised in wisdom teeth extraction are suggested. Alternatively, the author supports suggestions of a universal adoption of national guidelines similar to that currently implemented in the United Kingdom as the *Standard of Care* and *ethical* principles guiding wisdom teeth removals.