



## Getting It Straight

by Dr. Kirk Christensen,  
Woodstock's Orthodontic Specialist

The year is not yet a month old and someone has come to me with an example of how they were mis-led to believe that their general dentist was a specialist. The generalist had represented to this mom that they were a pedodontist, an orthodontist and an oral surgeon. Triple Specialty!?! I was skeptical, and advised her to make further inquiry. The office receptionist had much hesitation and off-phone deliberation. Finally, the office manager revealed that the DDS was not a licensed specialist in any of those fields. I would like to clarify that I am not on a personal crusade to rid the county of generalists doing specialty work. The law allows a generalist to practice as they wish. It is the deception, either in the form of misrepresentation of specialty title, or deception via omission of the facts, that has me concerned. Either way is unethical, and unfair to the public. I believe the public can make their own decisions on who they want to perform certain procedures if given the truth and the facts. Some may choose a specialist, others may be comfortable with their generalist. Here is a point of interest that surprises most people. As an orthodontist, I am limited by the laws of the dental practice act as to what procedures I can perform. When I advertise myself as an orthodontic specialist, I may only do orthodontics, some routine primary tooth extractions, minor esthetic tooth modifications, minor gum tissue modification, and bleaching. I am not allowed to do fillings, crowns, bridges, root canals, extensive periodontal or oral surgery, etc. If I do any of these other procedures I can be in licensure trouble, even though I hold a general dental license in addition to my specialty license, and have been trained in all the "forbidden" procedures in order to receive my DDS degree, and then further in my general practice residency. If I must follow the practice act and ethical laws, so should my colleagues in the general dental area. For if they don't, then it seems to me that there should be no restriction on the procedures that we as specialists can do. We are limited, they are not, but their obligation is to be forthright about the licenses they hold. On that note, contrary to misinformation, no orthodontist is moving onto Eastwood Drive. Woodstock Orthodontics is the only orthodontic specialty practice in Woodstock and remains located on Judd Street. Dr. Christensen's column appears weekly in the Northwest Herald. Questions to be answered and treatment inquiries may be directed to: **Woodstock Orthodontics, c/o Kirk H. Christensen, DDS, 226 West Judd Street, Woodstock, IL 60098, Phone: 815-337-5522**