Dentists dish on their top 10 fantasy patients

By Keri Kramer, Chicago Dental Society

Who would dentists dream to see in their chair? The world’s best known personalities have dental needs too. But what could modern dental treatments do for some of history’s famous figures? What fictional characters could use some real time with a modern dentist? The Chicago Dental Society surveyed more than 250 members to find out which patients — real, fake, alive or dead — they’d most like to see in their chair. Imagine this eclectic list of patients together in a waiting room:

10) Dracula. Twilight fever has left our dentists wondering about those pointy teeth. Are they hollow like drinking straws? Can drinking blood cause cavities?

9) Elvis Presley. A visit with the King might finally put to rest those rumors about his death, but dentists are also curious about what cosmetic dental work was like in the 1960s.

8) Mona Lisa. Was a poor smile the reason the subject of the famous painting stayed tightlipped?

7) President Barack Obama. Bragging rights aside, dentists are generally concerned with our presidents’ oral health — from the effects of his smoking to jaw clenching.

6) Julia Child. How was the oral health of one of America’s greatest cooking legends? Our dentists would like to know, and maybe also swap recipes.

5) Tiger Woods. Some dentists admit they want the scoop on his “transgressions” first hand. Others are just seeking a great golf partner. One wants to fix Tiger’s “pesky” discolored tooth.

4) Albert Einstein. Access to one of the greatest minds ever would certainly make for great conversation.

3) Jesus. Self-explanatory!

2) G.V. Black (known as the “Founding Father of Modern Dentistry”). Quite unanimously, dentists agreed treating him would be an honor.

And the No. 1 patient dentists would like to see in their practice: George Washington. Two words: wooden teeth.

Member poll

The Chicago Dental Society conducted its seventh annual member poll to learn more about their opinions on current trends, dental topics and more. From the more than 250 members who answered the fall 2009 survey, the society learned:

• The effects of the recession on the local dental industry have worsened since last year. More than 90 percent of dentists surveyed said their clients are putting off cosmetic procedures, up from 60 percent. More than 75 percent of dentists say their patients are putting off needed dental work — in 2008 more than half of dentists noted the same. And visits for preventative dental care are also on the decline according to more than half of dentists, up from more than 40 percent last year.

• Nearly 75 percent of dentists surveyed said their patients are reporting increased stress in their lives.

And 65 percent of dentists are seeing an increase in jaw clenching and teeth grinding among their patients, signs that stress may be taking its toll on the mouth.

• Interesting food flavors continue to make their way into dental products. Nearly 40 percent of those surveyed are intrigued by mango toothpaste, and more than a quarter of dentists wouldn’t mind trying chocolate toothpaste. Some dentists are also curious about cupcake or coffee dental floss and corn dog mint.