



**American Association of Oral  
and Maxillofacial Surgeons**

9700 West Bryn Mawr Avenue • Rosemont, Illinois 60018-5701 • 847.678.6200 • 800.822.6637 • FAX 847.678.6286 • 847.678.6279

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**Arthur C. Jee, DMD**  
**President**

**Robert C. Rinaldi, PhD, CAE**  
**Executive Director**

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*The New York Times*  
620 8th Avenue  
New York, NY 10018

To the Editor

As president of the American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons, the professional association that represents more than 9,000 OMSs in the United States, I wish to express our disappointment and concern regarding the September 5, 2011 article by Ms. Roni Caryn Rabin entitled “Wisdom of Having That Tooth Removed.”

While researching her article, Ms. Rabin spoke at length to oral and maxillofacial surgeons considered experts in the field of third molar research and surgery, including University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill Professor Raymond P. White, Jr, DDS, PhD, who served as lead investigator for the landmark Third Molar Clinical Trials. Additionally, the AAOMS provided Ms. Rabin with a wealth of articles and other evidenced-based research findings which indicate that: an absence of symptoms does not equal the absence of disease; retained wisdom teeth frequently and unpredictably change position, eruption and periodontal status; over time even retained, asymptomatic wisdom teeth are more likely to exhibit progressive periodontal disease; and retained wisdom teeth with periodontal pocketing increases the risk for several broader conditions that are associated with increased systemic inflammation, including preterm birth and cardiovascular disease.

The AAOMS does not advocate for the “prophylactic extraction of wisdom teeth,” as Ms. Rabin states in her article. Rather, we believe that while not all wisdom teeth need to be extracted, all of them need to be managed. Oral and maxillofacial surgeons provide their patients the best advice based on a careful oral examination, appropriate imaging and tests, and frank discussions with the patient and caregivers. If a decision is made to keep the wisdom teeth, we advise the patient to keep the area scrupulously clean and recommend an annual examination to assess any changes in the teeth or gum tissues.

Regrettably, Ms Rabin chose to not only ignore the information provided by AAOMS and the two esteemed oral and maxillofacial surgeons, she also chose to ignore the advice of the professional who knows her daughter best – her family dentist. It is difficult and sometimes frightening to make important decisions regarding our children, but we should not lightly dismiss the treatment recommendations of experienced and skilled professionals who are knowledgeable about the latest evidence-based research and have as their chief concern the well being of their patients. What is truly unfortunate in this particular instance is that, statistically, Ms Rabin has most likely postponed recommended treatment.

Sincerely,

Arthur C. Jee, DMD  
President, AAOMS

cc: AAOMS Board of Trustees