Georgia dentist says state will pay for general anesthesia

Severe anxiety, phobia, severe gagging, life-threatening allergies and the inability to use local anesthetics are among the myriad of reasons that more than 100,000 Georgians are unable to receive the dental care they need in a dentist’s office, says Dr. David Kurtman of Marietta, Ga.

For these people, Kurtman says, dentistry ranges from something nearly akin to torture to a life-threatening experience — yet many want and need care.

In 1999, to little fanfare, the state senate of Georgia passed a law to help these people. Because their only alternative is to have their dental work done while they are truly and fully asleep, Senate Bill 66 mandates medical insurance to pay the additional costs of general anesthesia and hospital costs for these people.

"Once the prohibitive costs of being fully asleep in the hospital are handled, a lot more of these people can afford the dental care they really need," Kurtzman explained.

No one really talks about this law, certainly not the insurance companies," says Kurtzman, who has been treating such cases for more than 20 years. He says he had worked for years trying to get these costs paid. Even when he got to speak with people within the insurance companies he called, nobody ever mentioned it.

Not until a chance call to the insurance commissioners’ office in Atlanta led Kurtzman to the obscure bill did his office start getting more and more coverage for patients.

The law states that medical insurance must pay hospital and anesthesia fees for any person for whom a successful result cannot be expected using local anesthesia.

"Because of physical, intellectual or another compromising medical condition” of the insured patient, anyone who really needs it can now expect coverage for sedation dentistry.

“We are seeing people who have lived with pain and infection for literally years,” Kurtzman says.

Care under general anesthesia in the hospital operating room gives thousands of these people hope for a healthy, painless and beautiful smile, he says.

(Source: PRWeb)