

## Choosing a Cosmetic Dentist

By Gigi Anders

Although cosmetic dentistry is a real term—and there’s been lobbying to make it a specialty like endodontics (root-canal work) and periodontics (gum work)—the American Dental Association doesn’t recognize it as such. All general dentists can call themselves “cosmetic,” and most do cosmetic work. Got a brown spot on a front tooth? Your family dentist can fix that with bonding material.

Some dentists, such as Rena Vakay and Waldorf’s Bradley Olson, train to a higher degree by taking ongoing courses in aesthetic procedures. Vakay, for example, is an accredited member of the AACD, but few dentists bother with accreditation: There are only nine accredited members in all of DC, Maryland, and Virginia. Among area practitioners, accredited members include a trio in Rockville: Martin Abel, Patrick Murray, and Arthur Weiss.

Olson is an accredited fellow—the highest credential. Only four other area dentists—Sidney Markowitz in DC, Nils Olson in Frederick, H.R. Makarita in Oakton, and Ronald Jackson in Middleburg—are fellows.

To get accredited, members must pass written and clinical exams as well as oral tests before a board of examiners. The program, Olson says, “is valuable because it’s a protection for the public. We like the fact that there’s a way you can achieve a credential that says you can do the things you say you can do.” Olson says, however, that a dentist’s lack of accreditation does not mean the dentist is not as good.

Dr. Michael Pollowitz, a DC dentist who is on *The Washingtonian*’s list of top dentists but who has not sought accreditation, agrees. “It doesn’t mean they have better results,” he says.

As with choosing any medical practitioner, it’s a good idea to ask friends and family for referrals. If a dentist is not accredited, you might ask if he or she has taken continuing education in cosmetic procedures. Any dentist should also be able to show you photos of previous cases and offer options.

To see *The Washingtonian*’s most recent list of top dentists as voted by their peers, go to [Washingtonian.com/dentists](http://Washingtonian.com/dentists). The general-dentists list includes top votegetters for cosmetic work. Other specialists, such as prosthodontists, also do cosmetic procedures.

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