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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2018

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**Dr. Hazel Glasper**  
Comprehensive Dentist  
Marriottsville, MD



We work with patients  
to realize a shared vision  
of uncompromising  
excellence in dentistry.

- Dr. Glasper



# Dr. Hazel Glasper

## Comprehensive Dentist

Dr. Glasper received her Bachelor of Science in Biology at Spelman College. She continued her education at Howard University in Washington, D.C., where she received her Doctorate Degree in Dental Surgery. Dr. Glasper completed her post-graduate residency program at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

For over 20 years, Dr. Hazel Glasper has been empowering her patients to advocate for their health through her comprehensive and "holistic" approach to dentistry. Her philosophy of treating the "whole" patient, with open communication and patient education, has transformed her patients into savvy, informed and healthy decision makers. Committed to advancing the perception of oral health, Dr. Hazel Glasper founded a national oral health campaign, Teach Me Dental, and The Comprehensive Dental Continuum (TCDC), a consulting agency committed to improving the practice of dentistry.

Dr. Glasper's training programs demonstrate methods to adequately educate patients, enabling a complete approach to care and better patient experiences while helping dentists improve their profitability. Dr. Glasper's post-graduate work has included training with some of today's most renowned restorative and cosmetic dentists.

Dr. Glasper has sought out thought leaders in all areas of comprehensive dentistry and trained with them throughout her career.

Dr. Glasper's practice, Revive Dental, has been listed numerous times as a Top Doctor by Baltimore Magazine. She is a regular contributor to Maryland's Women's Journal on topics relating to comprehensive dentistry and has also written for various publications. Look for her article 'Comprehending Comprehensive Dentistry' published in Dentaltown Magazine.

Dr. Glasper was appointed an ambassador on Oral Health for the American Heart Association in Maryland. She has partnered with Morgan State University to bring oral health education to the institution and the community. She was recently appointed to sit on Maryland's Dental Action Coalition a legislative committee addressing oral health bills on behalf of Marylanders.

On her crusade to change the perception of dentistry, Dr. Glasper is frequently featured in the media and has appeared on CNN, Fox News, NBC, PBS, and multiple radio shows, including Sirius XM and the Tom Joyner Show and cohost's a community show on RadioOne in Baltimore, MD.

Dr. Glasper has a beautiful family with three children.

[re•vive]

Comprehensive Dentistry

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Dr. Hazel Glasper

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*“Strong Women.*

*May we know them.*

*May we be them.*

*May we raise them.”*

## Her Journey Begins

**Dr. Glasper:** You asked what drew me into dentistry initially. I always knew that I was going to be a doctor. I never really considered dentistry until I was speaking to a classmate during my junior year at Spelman College. I don't know if you know a lot about Spelman, but some of the most influential African-American women in this country were educated there. In fact, my classmate is the first African-American woman to become CEO of first Sam's Club, and now COO of Starbucks. The women that I went to school with are accomplishing incredible things all across the world.

**Bonnie:** So you have always surrounded yourself with strong, dedicated women.

**Dr. Glasper:** Yes. My mother is very strong and set a great example. She was hard-working and dedicated, not only to being a parent, but also to helping my dad run the family business. Mom really knew who she was, which I think has helped me in my journey, as well. I think I'm a lot like her.

I started out to become a pediatrician, which is funny. Although I like kids, I don't think working with them in that way is something I would have been great at. The shift began as I said, in my junior year. I was talking to a classmate and I thought we were both applying to medical school. When she told me that she was applying to dental school, I couldn't believe it! I thought dentistry was what people did

when they couldn't get into medical school. I was mistaken.

**Bonnie:** So many people (particularly physicians) still have that impression. But both are medical specialties, right?

**Dr. Glasper:** Yes. Dentistry is a highly specialized branch of medicine. I realized that if this brilliant woman was going to go to dental school, there was something about dentistry that I was missing. That conversation opened up a new world of possibilities for me.

Fortunately, I'm a person who listens to her inner voice. It was in that moment, it became clear to me that I was going to pursue dentistry. That was a big shift for me.

# In Search of Excellence

**Dr. Glasper:** Becoming a dentist was the best decision I could have made. I know now that I was meant to be a dentist. Over the years, I've searched out and studied with some of the most learned and accomplished people in dentistry and applied what I learned in my own practice. Even early on I knew I wanted to do more than fill teeth and do cleanings. I've always been someone who challenges the status quo. During my residency, I was one of two African-American women in my cohort, and saw this experience as a way to make an impact on multiple levels.

Following my residency, I continued my education - studying occlusion, cosmetic dentistry and comprehensive dentistry, with the knowledge that eventually, I would create my own path and develop my own method of practice. I loved dentistry, but I felt there was something missing - something that wasn't being talked about.

I first began hearing conversations about the oral-systemic link in 1999 - way before AAOSH. I found the proposed connection between gum disease and systemic diseases like heart attacks and strokes absolutely fascinating.

At that time, it wasn't a subject that was being widely talked about, but I became a believer early on. When I lost my first patient to a heart attack in 2000, I knew I had found my calling.

My practice was still rather new at the time, and he and his family were among my first patients. This very health-conscious husband and father of two was also a successful business owner. His wife, who is still a patient, was an executive for a major company. He had just had a battery of tests run and his doctor had given him a clean bill of health, but he had moderate to severe gum disease and refused to have it treated. For an entire year, I allowed this gentleman to dictate treatment, rather than insist on addressing a condition I knew was problematic. I didn't push, because I had just opened my practice and I didn't want to lose this family of four.

I think it's important to note that my practice has always been profitable, even in the beginning. I've been fortunate to have a steady and loyal patient base and to have learned early how to run a profitable practice based on the comprehensive care model. But, regardless of how

successful we are, I don't think we ever consider our patients expendable, if you know what I mean. So, I made a business decision not to push this patient to receive treatment. Instead, I hoped that if I educated him about the effect his gum disease could have on his overall health, he would come around. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. After about a year, I decided that I couldn't continue in this way - that allowing him to ignore my treatment recommendations boiled down to supervised neglect, and I wouldn't be a party to that.

On his next visit, I explained to his wife that I was unwilling to keep performing basic cleanings on her husband, and that if he didn't agree to having the necessary surgery, that I would have to dismiss him from the practice. This was before the introduction of HIPAA Regulations.

After speaking with his wife, my patient agreed. We scheduled surgery for the following Wednesday. On Sunday, he died of a massive heart attack. When his wife called me on Monday to let me know, I was devastated. I closed down my practice for the day and went to sit with the family. In some ways,

# The Path Becomes Clear

I felt responsible – that I hadn't done enough. Perhaps if I had explained the situation better or had used different words, my patient might not have died.

I've shared this story in some of my presentations, especially with students, so they understand the importance of knowing your motivations for choosing dentistry and the importance of standing up for your convictions and doing what you know to do in every situation. These days, I don't have any problem being direct with my patients – using radiographs and imaging to educate them on the links between oral conditions and their overall health.

Over the years, I've found patient response to this approach to be very positive. In fact, they appreciate my candor and consider me an important part of their healthcare network. I don't think dentists do enough patient education.

About four months after my patient's death, his wife visited my office. She said it had taken her that long to get up the courage to ask me whether I thought her husband's gum disease had been a factor in his death. I told her that I absolutely believed it had been

a contributing factor. Recently, I hosted my first Comprehensive Continuum Conference to educate dental professionals about the importance of recognizing and diagnosing oral and systemic health issues in our patients, and the impact of not doing so. His death was a tragedy that could have possibly been avoided, and it has inspired me to launch this movement.

**Bonnie:** What a driving force behind your initiative to make sure that people understand that connection and how much is at stake when they neglect their health.

**Dr. Glasper:** It's vitally important. Whether I'm speaking to laypersons or dental professionals, I emphasize the fact that I have lost more than one patient to heart disease associated with gum disease and that I have diagnosed systemic illnesses in many of my patients – auto-immune conditions, gastrointestinal problems, kidney disease and cancer come to mind. I've documented thousands and thousands of cases where poor oral health was a contributing factor in illness or death. My own brother died of complications associated with gum disease. I

consider it my responsibility as a clinician to focus more widely on the issue of overall health whether than oral health alone.

Think about this. I practice in the third richest county in the United States. I come from a middle class family. I have found that regardless of a patient's economic profile, educated patients are more likely to invest in their oral health.

**Bonnie:** Then the roadblock often isn't financial or insurance related. It's that they don't value or understand the importance of dentistry or their oral health.

**Dr. Glasper:** Yes. That's why I emphasize patient education as a key factor in the success of my practice. I have worked in other practices with patients who have been limited financially, but that is generally not the case in my practice. My patients are business owners, executives, and educators. They have the resources. But what they haven't had until now is an understanding of and appreciation for the importance of good oral health.

**Bonnie:** You realized that if even the most educated and affluent members of your com-



munity didn't understand the importance of good oral health, others certainly didn't.

**Dr. Glasper:** EXACTLY. Now you get it! So why aren't we talking about that? A principal teaching point of my platform is that we are experiencing two healthcare crises - a patient healthcare crisis and a practice healthcare crisis. They feed into each other. The lack of value people place on oral health is key. They don't think about it. I don't care how affluent you are. I don't care what culture you come from. I don't care what socio-economic issues are involved. 97% of my patients present to my practice with major dental issues. Now why is that?

As dentists, we should always fully diagnose and lay out a treatment plan for these cases, and we aren't, in many cases.

## The Big Revelation –

## Dentistry Saves Lives

It's important that dentists assume a greater role in preserving the well-being of our patients. I like to refer to dentists as "physicians of the oral cavity", which is what we are. I believe that dentists are unappreciated. People think our purview is limited to the care of teeth, but it extends far beyond that. When we understand and accept that fact, we can change the common perception of what dentistry is about, not only through patient education, but also by interacting with physicians in other specialties, many of whom are not aware of these oral-systemic links to disease.

Granted, this takes time and a huge degree of commitment. It means spending more

time with each patient, doing complete examinations, taking proper images and using them to present a comprehensive treatment plan. Many of my patients are referred from other practices. Many have put off treatment because of fear or lack of education. In the end, many who say they want "only what my insurance will cover" come around, because of the way I've chosen to practice.

**Bonnie:** Now that HIPAA IS an issue, you can't have that conversation with a spouse. What kind of advice do you give other dentists about the importance of having that conversation no matter how difficult it may be?

**Dr. Glasper:** Just have it! Get clear about what role you play. One of the first things is to really take a look at whether you value what you do. Do you value dentistry? Do you think the work you do is important? Our opinion of ourselves and the services we provide trumps insurance concerns. It's important to understand the patients desire but as doctors our diagnosis of the immediate care that is needed must be priority. One of the most important things for new dentists to understand is that each patient represents an opportunity to address health, function and aesthetics. What is the condition of the patient's mouth? How well does it serve the functions for which it was designed. Does it fully serve the needs of the patient, functionally and aesthetically?

When we take this kind of comprehensive approach, our patients perceive us as more than tooth doctors. If we want our patients to follow our treatment recommendations, we must not only be knowledgeable and thorough, we must also be passionate about treating the whole person – not just their teeth. That is how you will win your patients' trust - health, function, and aesthetics.

When you are clear about who you are and what your responsibility is to your patients, they respect your opinion. Self-perception is critical. It's a key point of learning in my

dental coaching programs. It's really important that you look at yourself and decide what kind of clinician you're going to be and what kind of practice model you're going to have.

It's like when you're talking to your kids about not drinking or not smoking. If you come from a place of uncertainty, don't you think they're going to pick that up in your voice and your mannerisms?

**Bonnie:** Absolutely. And if you're not 100 percent convinced that what you're saying is valid, true and important, they're not going to listen.

**Dr. Glasper:** Yes. If you're hedging and stumbling and you're not clear about what you're saying, there's a disconnect. And, if the first thing that a patient throws out is "Does my insurance cover that?" then my response is "Mr. or Ms. So-and-so, I'm a clinician. I'm your doctor. Whether your insurance covers this or not, this is my recommendation. Now, if you want to have a financial discussion, I have a treatment coordinator up front. But right now we're having a medical discussion."

**Bonnie:** I think what you just said in terms of mindset and deciding for yourself what type of clinician you want to be is important. Sometimes when I speak with dentists, I hear things like "I know things are different than they used to be,

but I just don't want to feel like I have to sell dentistry." If you feel like you're selling, then your head is in the wrong place and your approach is all wrong.

**Dr. Glasper:** Right. And that's why the slogan for my coaching business is "Sell more dentistry. Save more lives". It simply means that you follow a certain process in your practice whereby you diagnose your patient as a clinician with a clear understanding of the conditions that are tied to oral health. In doing this, your patients' lives will be improved or saved by the level of care that you provide. You're changing the context of that conversation.

**Bonnie:** Yes, you're selling dentistry, and you're doing what's in that patient's best interest. You're not selling anything they don't need; you're promoting health. You're making sure that they begin to develop a value of dentistry and of good health in general. It's an internal mindset that has to shift first. And you have to stop apologizing for recommending treatment that may not be covered by their insurance.

**Dr. Glasper:** When I talk to some dentists, I close the door and I say, "Can we talk? Let's have a personal conversation about what we do. Do we understand that the patients who are coming into our practice believe that we went to dental school because we couldn't get



into medical school? When you start understanding the mentality of the patients you serve, you can develop a strategy." And when you understand what you're dealing with and how history has played into this devaluation of what we do, you see how dentists themselves have played a part in developing the current culture of drill and fill, patchwork dentistry.

Imagine going to your internist because you've been feeling lethargic and you're just "off." The internist takes blood, they get the lab tests back and share your results. They tell you that you're borderline anemic; but they do not tell you about the other seven abnormalities from the lab work. In dentistry, a patient can come in and have gum disease, missing teeth, oral infection, and we allow them to dictate treatment. We only focus on a little area and that patient leaves being undiagnosed or under-diagnosed, untreated or under-treated. Considering this scenario, one can see that we hurt both our patients and our practices when we fail to practice comprehensively. Comprehensive dentistry is a profitable practice. Not only do our patients understand the value of health, function, and aesthetics, they see the value of investing in treatment. Comprehensive team members are highly motivated and inspired by their respective roles in improving the quality of the lives of our patients. Comprehensive practices don't have to accept all insurances, because they aren't

focused on maintaining patient volume. Ultimately, dentists who practice comprehensive care work less hours and earn much higher profits. It's a practice model that can turn your whole practice around.

**Bonnie:** You've been successful in your practice from day one by taking this approach and understanding that this is the direction you were going to take your patients and your practice and your team. What's the pathway for a dentist who wants to go from a traditional dental practice to a comprehensive practice like yours and feel confident in being able to make the impact that you make in your patients' lives?

**Dr. Glasper:** It all goes back to the culture and mindset. First of all, understand it's a win/win. I get to practice the dentistry of my dreams. You have to determine what kind of dentistry you really want to deliver. What kind of practice do you really want to have? And then you have to study. I have had to get additional education.

I had to be trained to do these treatment plans at a high level of competency and excellence. It's important that you seek out and train with the individuals who are providing this level of care. The second thing is mindset, mindset, mindset. You must engage in some mindset training. I teach my clients to shift their mindset so they can move their practice forward.

Ultimately, it's all about language and perception. You must display confidence for your patients to perceive value in your treatment. I'm often asked, "Dr. Glasper, how can I take a patient who comes in only wanting their chief complaint addressed, to doing quadrant dentistry or full mouth rehabilitation, or at least addressing the issues that I know are critical?" It's a process, and it's well worth the effort. I'm here to encourage, to help and to inspire others in the dental profession to look at dentistry in a whole new way. It's within our power to not only improve, but to save lives.



Audio



Video



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To learn more about Dr. Glasper's programs and building relationships within the healthcare community, visit [DrGlasper.com](http://DrGlasper.com). For more on changing the public perception of dentistry, join the conversation at [TeachMeDental.com](http://TeachMeDental.com)