# When a Patient Asks ChatGPT for a Dentist, Do You Show Up?

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When a patient asks an AI assistant to recommend a dentist, it quotes the practices it can verify as credible. This guide explains, in plain English, what actually drives that — author authority and named-dentist bylines, a practice name that travels, freshness, and answer-first content.

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> This is general educational material for dental practice owners and managers, not legal, marketing or technical advice. No one can guarantee that an AI assistant will recommend any particular practice — these systems change constantly. This guide is about making your practice *credible and readable* to them, not about gaming anything.

A patient with a sore tooth used to open Google, type "dentist near me", and scroll. A growing number now open ChatGPT, Perplexity, or Google's AI answers and ask: *"Find me a good dentist in [suburb] who can see me this week."* The assistant reads the web, names two or three practices, and gives a one-line reason for each.

It didn't pick them at random, and it didn't pick them by who paid. **It picked the practices it could trust** — the ones whose expertise it could actually see and verify. That, underneath the jargon, is what "AEO" is about.

## SEO got you ranked. AEO gets you *trusted*.

For twenty years, being found online meant ranking on Google's blue links — that's **SEO**. AI assistants play a different game: they read pages, decide which sources are credible, and **quote** a few in the answer. Getting quoted isn't about keywords. It's about **authority**.

Google's framework for this is **E-E-A-T** — Experience, Expertise, Authoritativeness, Trustworthiness. And because dentistry is "Your Money or Your Life" (health) content, the bar is set deliberately high. AI systems lean on the same signals.

## The single biggest lever: put a real dentist's name on it

The most important — and most overlooked — discoverability signal in 2026 is **authorship**. AI assistants and Google strongly favour content written or reviewed by a **named, credentialed**

**person they can verify**. Google added a dedicated "Authors" section to its own documentation in early 2026; for health content, a named expert author is now treated as a primary trust signal.

In practice, this means:

- **Every clinical or advice page carries a byline** — *"Reviewed by Dr Jane Smith, BDS (Syd), AHPRA DEN0001234"* — not just *"the practice team"*.
- **That dentist has a real bio page**: qualifications, AHPRA registration, years of experience, special interests.
- **The name is verifiable across the web** — the AHPRA register, the ADA find-a-dentist directory, LinkedIn. AI systems actually cross-check whether the author named on your page resolves to a real, credentialed person *elsewhere*. An anonymous page tends to get filtered out of the answer; a verifiable expert page survives.

If you do one thing after reading this: stop publishing dental advice under a faceless brand name, and start attributing it to your actual dentists, with their credentials.

## Your name has to travel — mentions beat links

Old-school SEO was won with backlinks. AI visibility is won more by **being talked about**. Research across tens of thousands of brands found that brand *mentions* line up with appearing in AI answers roughly **three times** more strongly than backlinks do — and how often people search your practice *by name* is one of the single strongest predictors of being cited.

For a practice, that means:

- Be present, and **accurate**, everywhere an AI reads about dentists: Google Business Profile, HealthEngine, HotDoc, the ADA directory, the AHPRA listing, local press.
- Earn genuine mentions — community involvement, being quoted, real local coverage — rather than buying links.

## Fresh pages get quoted; stale ones get skipped

AI assistants prefer current information. The large majority of AI citations come from pages updated in the last 6–12 months, and some engines (Perplexity especially) effectively won't quote content that looks old. Show a real **"last reviewed"** date on your key pages — and actually keep them current.

## Answer the real question — first

An assistant quotes the part of your page that *directly answers the patient*. Structure for that:

- Make headings the **questions patients actually ask**: *"How long does a root canal take?"*, *"What does an implant consultation cost?"*
- Put a **direct 40–60 word answer right under the heading**, before the detail. That short, self-contained answer is the chunk an assistant can lift.

- Be **specific and first-hand** — your real process, real cost ranges, real recovery times. Copy that's identical to a hundred other dental sites doesn't get cited; original detail does.

## The plumbing still has to work (table stakes)

None of the above replaces the basics — it sits on top of them:

- The **same name, address and phone** everywhere — your website, Google Business Profile, and every directory.
- Machine-readable **schema** (a `Dentist` profile plus `FAQ` markup) — a quick job for whoever maintains your site, and one of the easiest ways to stand out: in our June 2026 audit of 1,156 live Sydney dental practice websites, only about a third exposed any machine-readable practice identity, and roughly one in seven had FAQ markup.
- A complete, claimed **Google Business Profile** with recent reviews you respond to.
- Pages that load well on mobile and aren't thin or near-duplicates of each other.

## Where you'll actually appear — the assistants differ

A quick reality check, because they don't behave the same way:

- **ChatGPT** leans on Bing's top results and favours established, authoritative sources.
- **Perplexity** fetches fresh content on every question and leans heavily on forums and reviews — recency and real discussion matter most here.
- **Google AI Overviews** mostly quote pages that **already rank** on Google — so baseline SEO is still the price of entry.

## One caution before you chase reviews and testimonials

Building authority with named dentists and patient reviews is exactly the right instinct — with one dental-specific line you can't cross. Encouraging patients to leave an **honest Google review** is fine. **Republishing patient testimonials about clinical care or outcomes in your own advertising** is treated differently under Ahpra's advertising rules. Build authority; just don't let it tip into advertising that creates a regulatory problem. See the companion guide, Website Advertising AI Review.

## See how an AI reads your site

The fastest way to find out where you stand is to look at your website the way an assistant does. Our free **discoverability scanner** reads your public pages — including whether your content carries real author authority — and gives you a plain red, amber or green read on whether patients *and* AI assistants can find and trust you, across Google search, AI answer engines, and Maps. No patient data, no cost.

For the fuller picture — discoverability alongside your website advertising-risk, privacy edge and booking friction — request your free practice Blueprint.

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**Disclaimer:** Educational guidance only, not legal advice. This guide is intended for practice workflow education. Do not enter patient-identifiable information into public AI tools.
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