Pakistan's dental organisation holds first national conference for implantology

By Daniel Zimmerman

KARACHI, Pakistan: Dental professionals in Pakistan lack awareness and training on how to place dental implants, experts have announced during the country's first ever implantology conference recently held in Karachi. Although treatment costs for implants are relatively low compared with countries in the West, most dentists in the country are still replacing teeth with conventional bridges or crowns, the President of the Federation of Implant Dentistry Pakistan (FIDP) Dr Irfan Qureshi said.

The event, which was organised by the Pakistani organisation and supported by the International Congress of Oral Implantologists, saw attendance by dental implantology experts from Asia, Europe and the USA. Over the course of three days, they presented on topics such as maintenance protocols, mini implants and sinus home- and practitioners from the country in diverse implant procedures but also to promote dental implantology in Pakistan in general. He also called for the specialty to be incorporated into the dental curriculum in dental schools nationwide.

"There are many cases of mal-practice with implants owing to a lack of training and poor case selection and planning," he said. "This is damaging the reputation of the specialty and the product itself.”

More recalls for DIY teeth-whiteners

The Australian government has recalled two more products for whitening teeth at home. The Bright White Express Advanced Teeth Whitening Kit and Pro Teeth Whitening Professional Teeth Whitening Pen, both distributed by Pro Teeth Whitening, a dental company based in Wellington Point in Eastern Australia, were found to contain levels of hydrogen peroxide that exceed common safety limits.

The country’s Poison Sstandard 2011 currently categorises all preparations containing more than 6% hydrogen peroxide as unsafe.

Since December last year, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has been recalling several DIY teeth-whitening kits that exceed the concentration considered to be safe for home use.
Higher than expected sports-related dental injuries in Indian schools

Daniel Zimmermann

LUDHIANA, India: Calls for the introduction of compulsory morning sport sessions in Indian schools have been overshadowed by recent findings demonstrating a high incidence of sports-related injuries—including those to teeth and jaws—among Indian scholars. A study, conducted by researchers from the Department of Paediatric and Preventive Dentistry at Ludhiana’s Christian Dental College in Northern India, found that approximately 25% of over 2,000 athletically active schoolchildren in Ludhiana had suffered from some form of sports-related injury to the face.

Sports-related injuries to the craniofacial apparatus were detected in one of ten children. The study also revealed that more than 50% of those observed had suffered from bruises and 15% from cuts to the face.

The figures confirm warnings by dentists from the Kothiwal Dental College and Research Centre in Uttar Pradesh that traumatic dental injuries (TDI) could pose a serious public health problem among 12-year-olds. Their study, which was published in 2010 by the Chinese Journal of Dental Research, found that 20% of TDIs occurred at school and/or during sporting activities. They called for a collection of data from across the country to obtain more information on the issue.

In December, the former captain of India’s national cricket team and head of the Vaseer Vegsvarkar Cricket Academy, Dilip Vengsarkar, called for morning sports to be made compulsory in schools nationwide. According to the country’s Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, M.S. Gill, a lack of sports facilities—particularly in larger cities—and posts for teachers have restricted physical education in recent years. The Minister has promised to improve the situation.

Calls for improving clinical skills, as well as creating a culture of sharing research and knowledge among the dental profession,“he said.

Currently, dental implant treatment is only available in larger clinics and costs between US$800 and $1600. A few international specialist companies, including Osstem (Korea), Dentaurum (Germany) and Zimmer Dental (USA), hold the market share.

A group of Indian schoolchildren in Puri. (DTI/Photo Steve Estvanik, United States)
Osteoporosis drug ingredient found useful against periodontitis

During a six-month trial, the researchers treated over 50 intra-bony defects with a solution made of 1 per cent Alendronate and a polycrylic acid-distilled water mixture. Other patients with the same conditions received a placebo.

The results showed an improvement of clinical parameters such as probing depth reduction, clinical attachment level and bone fill in patients treated with the Alendronate solution.

Preparations based on Alendronate, among them the controversial Fosamax distributed by Merck, are available on the market since 1995. They are used to treat common bone diseases like osteoporosis.

Data derived from clinical studies with these drugs has demonstrated a reduction of fracture risks and normalisation of bone turnover rate in post-menopausal women, amongst other benefits.

Dental practice goes Kitty-crazy

Bought by dentist Koshika Masanori in November, the facility has been completely renovated over the past two months, featuring pink examination rooms, heart-shaped waiting chairs and chandeliers. According to its website, the practice is currently offering a wide range of dental procedures, including implants, cosmetic dentistry, prophylaxis, as well as periodontal and paediatric treatment.

Media reports said that the unique project has received full support by Sanrio, whose Japanese headquarters is only 20 minutes away from the practice.

The company introduced its iconic logo modeled on a Japanese bobtail cat in 1974. Nowadays, it can be found on almost any retail product, including toys, clothing, cellphones and even tooth caps used in orthodontics.

Last year, the brand was reported to have generated over ¥80 billion (US$1.04 billion) revenues in Japan only.
Dear reader,

“...an emotional response that stems from the sum of all experiences your patients have.”

The key is to establish your practice’s brand.

Your brand is what comes to mind when your patients and prospective patients think of your practice. This is not your logo. Your logo is one piece that fits into what comprises a brand, but your brand is an emotional response that stems from the sum of all experiences your patients have while interacting with your practice. This starts from the first point of contact all the way through to check-up and any treatment follow-up that takes place.

The key to establishing your brand is to make a conscious decision on what you want this emotional response to be for your practice and designing each point of patient interaction to work together and reinforce this response.

Take for example one of the best examples of a distinctively crafted brand—Starbucks. For me, it is a warm, comfortable place where I’m always greeted by smiling, friendly staff, and a consistent, quality product. Yes, Starbucks is a coffee shop and sells coffee, but they can command a premium in the marketplace for a cup of coffee because they do it better.

Competition is ever increasing in this world of ours and dentistry is not immune from this trend. So, how do you set yourself apart and your dental practice apart from the competition and elevate yourself from being merely a commodity service?

In designing the brand for your dental practice, each of these factors is important and each of them contributes to how people remember you and what comes to mind when they think of you and the dental treatment you provide.

“But none of these things has anything to do with the expert care I provide as a dentist,” you say. No kidding! But, none of these factors has anything to do with brewing a cup of coffee, either. All these factors working together generate the experience that you are creating for your patients, which along with your logo, signage and website, is the true essence of your brand. None of it comes about by accident. Each component must be thought about and choices made on how well the components fit together to create a cohesive whole.

The dentist to patient ratio in Pakistan has improved significantly from 1:4.225 in 1995 to 1:12,000 in 2006. Despite this development, the country is in dire need of skilled dental professionals. As regulating authorities contemplate including dental implantology in the BDS curriculum, implant knowledge acquired by dentists is limited to private courses.

Continuing dental education, which is a means of acquiring new knowledge, is alien to Pakistan’s dental community. Despite implants being placed without formal knowledge or education owing to their lucrative nature.

The prospects of dental implantology in the country are promising owing to new regulations and improvements in the health care system put forward by the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council. A large part of the population is willing to have implant restorations, ranging from the elite, who are easily able to afford treatment, to the middle class, who would definitely have implants if treatment costs were a little more reasonable.

If dentists were given an opportunity to learn about implants, they would gladly learn, and this would bring costs down and a larger part of the population would be able to afford them. However, current implant success and survival, let alone optimal implant aesthetics, are often achieved by trial and error. Implant centres have been established in a few institutions and there are universities at which implants are placed but these hardly cater for the dearth of formal education and much-needed mandatory education in implantology.

The recent FIDP conference held in Karachi is a positive step towards implant education in Pakistan. It is a great opportunity for young graduates and private clinicians to learn from internationally qualified and acclaimed professionals, and gain exposure to the wealth of knowledge regarding what implantology has to offer.

Dr. Asqul Malik
Pakistan

Spearheaded by the rise of India and China, prospects for dental market players to expand in Asia look promising indeed. According to a recent report by the Asian Development Bank in the Philippines, the middle class in most Asian countries is expected to rise by an incredible rate of nine per cent annually. With more money to gain from potential taxpayers, governments will most likely invest in their health infrastructure, which could mean an increasing number of health professionals and, more importantly, improved working conditions for a whole new generation.

For dentists, this development means that they will be able to get hands-on with the latest equipment much faster thanbefore. Whereas previously, it took years before a product was launched and companies were reluctant to invest in a market owing to difficult regulations and low demand, nowadays products tend to be available only months or even weeks after they have been introduced to dentists in Europe or the USA.

The upcoming IDEM exhibition will be an important indicator of the extent to which the industry is willing to invest in the continent. The latest participant figures from Singapore suggest that more companies are willing to take the markets there seriously. For German companies, which exported a record number of goods worth €1 trillion last year, Asia has already become the largest growth market worldwide.

In an interview with the Bloomberg news corporation, Henry Schein’s CEO and Chairman Stanley M. Bergman recently announced his company’s significant investments in China. Similar statements have been made by the heads of other dental manufacturers, including DENTSPLY/Betts Wise. However, when the leader of the largest distributor of dental products in the world says this, it clearly means business.

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Cold plasma ‘a blast’ for teeth

Daniel Zimmermann

MEMPHIS & COLUMBIA, USA: Human trials on a revolutionary method to prepare dental cavities are expected to commence soon in the US. In collaboration with NanoNova Inc., a Columbia-based startup, a research team from the University of Missouri (MU) will test a device that is said to improve longevity of fillings through treatment with streams of low-temperature ionized gas.

The “plasma brush” first received recognition in 2009 when the Small Business Innovation Research program of the US government awarded US$157,000 to nanoNova for the development of the device. According to company representative Meng Chen, the first lab test using the method was successful and produced no side effects.

The technology exploits the properties of non-thermal plasma, also known as cold plasma owing to its low temperature, which has been used in other industrial sectors such as the food industry to sanitize fragile surfaces like those of fruit permanently. Through a similar process, the MU research team found that it also helped to disinfect oral cavities by producing oxygen-free radicals that are able to destroy biological microorganisms like bacteria by disrupting their cellular membranes.

In addition, cold plasma enhances the bond between the natural tooth surface and different filling materials by changing the surface of dentine through a chemical reaction. “Our studies indicate that fillings are 60 per cent stronger with the plasma brush, which would increase the filling’s lifespan,” Hao Li, professor in the University of Missouri College of Engineering said.

Chen said that if the trials produce clinical data that confirm the initial findings, the device could be available to dentists by the end of next year, depending on regulatory approval.

Colgate and DTSC launch network

NEW YORK, USA: Colgate-Palmolive has announced the launch of the Colgate Oral Health Network for Professional Education and Development—a new online resource dedicated to helping dental professionals improve the oral health and well-being of their patients. Through a partnership with the Dental Tribune Study Club, the Colgate Oral Health Network provides access to some of the latest information and developments in oral health.

Since December last year, dental professionals are able to access the free benefits of the Colgate Oral Health Network. It will offer educational resources such as live online webinars and on-demand seminars, the company said.

“Colgate has been a long-standing partner of dental professionals worldwide,” said Barbara Shearer, Director of Scientific Affairs at Colgate Oral Pharmaceuticals. “The launch of the Colgate Oral Health Network marks an expansion of our commitment to oral health education as we continue to help keep the profession connected with up-to-date news and E-learning opportunities.”

By offering these resources online, the Colgate Oral Health Network also serves as an interaction platform for dental professionals worldwide by incorporating various cultures and new perspectives into the educational mix, Shearer added.


IDEM Singapore delivers the latest international technologies and techniques via a powerful combination of international trade exhibition and cutting-edge scientific conference. Enriched with opportunities from the trading and showcasing of high-quality dental equipment to learning and development in the field of dental practice, this event is a “must-attend” for every dental and associated professional.

• Source from more than 380 international exhibitors from over 30 countries and network with the top names in the dental industry at the Trade Fair.
• Hear from world-class speakers on a diverse range of topics, such as implantology, aesthetics, endodontics, periodontics and orthodontics at the Scientific Conference.
• Don’t miss out on the limited attendance workshops by world-renowned experts in their fields.

For the list of speakers and their topics, visit www.idem-singapore.com now.
“Most dental practices will encounter fraud”
An interview with expert David Harris, United States

David Harris: There have been several studies by the American Dental Association and others. Collectively they suggest that the probability of a dentist being a fraud victim in his or her career is between 50 and 60 per cent. However, such statistics are necessarily low because there is an unquantifiable amount of fraud that is never detected or is detected but not disclosed.

Are there any reasons why dental practices would be more likely or less likely than other types of small businesses to experience fraud?

Two main points influence the prevalence of fraud in dentistry. First, the clinical responsibilities carried by dentists effectively reduce them to being absentee owners in their own businesses. Second, the fact that so much of dentistry is paid for by third parties reduces them to being absentee owners.

Is there a difference in potential for fraud in a three- or four-person office compared with a practice with 20 or more dentists?

Intuitively, one would think that a larger practice should be able to have tighter controls through increased separation of duties. But many group practices are essentially several solo practices sharing space, thus offering no particular administrative synergy. When a group practice is run as a single unit, the dentists owning the clinic tend to delegate oversight of the administrative functions to a single dentist. Given that there are many thefts perpetrated against a solo dentist, imagine the fraud possibilities when one dentist is overseeing a much larger business activity.

Do you have statistics for average or median losses to fraud based on various sized dental practices?

Unfortunately, there isn’t any published data specific to practice size. Bill Hiltz, who heads our investigation department, has a hypothesis that frauds typically range between 4 and 7 per cent of monthly revenue while the fraud is going on. In its 2007 Survey of Current Issues in Dentistry, the ADA surveyed dentists who had been fraud victims. The average estimated loss was US$14,174. Based on our own experience, this number is tremendously low. That’s not surprising because in the same survey only 51.7 per cent of the dentists who were fraud victims completed a fraud investigation, raising questions on how the remainder determined their losses. We normally find that the amount of fraud that dentists are able to identify without the benefit of professional assistance is far less than the true fraud.

We surveyed our own files several years ago and found an average theft of more than US$159,000. This is superficially consistent with the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners number of US$200,000 for the average small business loss, but many of its “small businesses” are much bigger than most dental practices. We have seen a number of dental frauds of more than US$500,000 and a few exceeding US$1 million.

What are the most typical types of fraud cases seen in dental practices?

Most of the fraud that we see is “revenue fraud.” Some examples are writing off amounts that were actually collected, deleting treatment that was done so that collections are “off the books” and billing the full amount to two insurance companies when someone has dual coverage.

A second type of fraud that we are seeing involves creation of “phantom” revenue. Insurance companies are billed for work that was never done, with funds either stolen directly or “lapped” through a fictional practice.

What motivates the typical perpetrator?

We see two types of fraudsters. One type we call “dishonesty”—these people typically believe that they should live better than their “official” compensation permits. I immediately think of one thief who rented a private plane with stolen funds for a New York City shopping trip with girlfriends. Funds from another major theft were used to purchase a yacht and the most expensive BMW available. The other group I would characterize as “desperate.” These people struggle to meet basic needs. There might be an addiction, an uninsured medical condition, a divorce or an unemployed spouse. In contrast to the dishonest fraudsters, these people have their moral compass altered by their desperation. Many initially plan to repay what they “borrowed,” but a continuing deficit frustrates this. Interestingly, the desperate thieves have normally worked for more than eight years at their office.

What are the strongest deterrents?

Deterrence is effective with crimes of opportunity, it is carefully planned with complete awareness of the control systems in place, and it is crafted to bypass these controls. Adding more controls simply increases the circumvention challenge. Most of the thieves we see can easily adapt.

Because shoplifting is a crime of opportunity, control systems such as video cameras, radio frequency identification tags on merchandise are effective at helping to prevent pilferage; however, such deterrence is unlikely to work in a dental practice.
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The other point I will make is that fear of punishment seems to be virtually ineffective in deterrence. Embezzlers we see are well-aware of the consequences of their actions, which include loss of livelihood and potentially, loss of liberty. Because of the needs of each group, we should not expect punishment to deter either the dishonest or the desperate fraudsters.

**Are there any effective deterrents?**

My suggestion is that deterrence strategies that provide no collateral benefit (i.e., are done only to discourage fraud) are a waste of resources; instead dentists should focus on early detection of fraud.

I will again disagree with much of the collective “wisdom” that exists on dental embezzlement when I say that for a dentist or advisors to try to confirm fraud by some form of audit or analysis is unproductive and possibly dangerous. Because there are many possible ways to steal from a dentist, without considerable knowledge and some specialized software, this activity is looking for a needle in a field of haystacks. Fortunately for dentists, even though there are myriad ways to steal, the behaviour of embezzlers is remarkably consistent. With the right knowledge, identifying embezzlement through behavioural analysis is painless and reliable.

We have a behavioural assessment questionnaire requiring less than five minutes to complete, which dentists can request from our website.

**How does an economic downturn affect dental-practice fraud?**

Difficult economic times create more of these desperate people I mentioned earlier, which creates more fraud. We did notice a much larger incidence of fraud in the Detroit area after the auto industry downsizing a few years ago.

**What are the first critical steps a dental practice owner should take if he or she suspects internal fraud is occurring?**

Unfortunately, intuitive steps are not always the right ones at this point. Dentists try to conduct their own investigation, bring their CPA into the office, or call the police. Doing any of these will likely alert a perceptive thief to your suspicions.

The overarching objective is not to telegraph your suspicion to the suspect. When fraudsters think they are about to be discovered, their strong urge is to destroy evidence. This invariably causes collateral damage. Destruction might consist of wiping the computer’s hard drive and destroying all backup media.

In one spectacular case, the victims did not engage us but began their own (clumsy) investigation. The thief, once alerted, burned down the office!

This is really the point where expert guidance is needed. We have an “immediate action checklist” for dentists who suspect fraud in their office. They can request the checklist from our website.

Our investigative process is completely stealthy, I promise never to send a nerdy-looking investigator to your office. This helps ensure that evidence is protected, and also that working relationships are not destroyed in the event that suspicions are groundless.

**What is the most unusual fraud case you have encountered?**

About once a month we see a crash quite easily. A built-in generator. The plus? Ultimate LED technology for daylight quality light, exceptional reproduction of natural colours and clear, unparalleled colour contrast. The downside? No other LED solution comes close by comparison.

The Alega LED+ series: now available from your specialist retailer.

Regardless of which unit or drive you are using, new Alega LED+ turbines and contra-angles light your way with their very own light supply. The secret? A built-in generator. The plus? Ultimate LED technology for daylight quality light, exceptional reproduction of natural colours and clear, unparalleled colour contrast. The downside? No other LED solution comes close by comparison.

The Alega LED+ series: now available from your specialist retailer.

**How much of a problem is external fraud involving customers, vendors, suppliers or other business relationships compared with internal fraud?**

It certainly happens. We see a fair amount of identity theft from people trying to make use of someone else’s insurance coverage or to obtain prescription medication. However, the financial and other damage that this type of activity normally causes pales in comparison to the damage caused by embezzlement.

**Is there specific insurance owners can buy to protect their business against loss to fraud?**

Is such insurance worth getting?

This insurance is either included in the basic insurance package that offices already have or an “employee dishonesty” rider can be added. I don’t have cost details, but understand that it is quite inexpensive. Based on what I said about the probability of fraud in offices, I think everyone should have this coverage.

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**Thank you very much for this interview.**
Japanese handpiece manufacturer NSK boosts North American presence

Robert Selleck
Dental Tribune America

LITTLETON, Colo., USA: For years, NSK dental handpieces have been used extensively by orthodontic specialists in the USA and Canada who are attracted to the company’s reliable, user-friendly performance and reputation for quality. A word-of-mouth advertising strategy combined with highly targeted customer relationships has worked well for the organisation.

But the strategy has also meant that there are many dental professionals who still aren’t sure about what makes NSK so different from other handpiece manufacturers. That’s about to change.

The dental equipment manufacturer, founded in 1930 in Japan, is raising its US and Canadian profile in a big way, perhaps most noticeably this month by the May 2011 opening of its newly constructed North American headquarters in Illinois. The facility includes a showroom, training facility, expanded warehouse space and a larger parts and service centre.

“The company made the decision last year to increase its investment in North America in 2011,” said NSK Dental Marketing Manager Rob Gochoel. “We’ve also added office and technical-service staff, and an internal team of representatives who will be able to work directly with a greater number of dental practices.”

The company is also expanding its distributor relationships. As a whole, the efforts should enable NSK to provide information about its unique business model to most of the dental practices in North America.

The company’s efforts also include an expanded dental convention presence, which began with the 2011 Greater New York Dental Meeting, so practitioners are more easily able to hold an NSK handpiece and experience first-hand what has enabled the company to become one of the top handpiece manufacturers in the world.

“We’re making the investment in an opportunity to connect with more customers,” Gochoel said. “Not only will we be able to handle customer questions and enquiries much faster, but we also will be able to further develop a sense of loyalty by developing even more personal relationships with doctors.”

NSK is able to respond quickly and specifically to local needs because it maintains complete in-house control of the manufacturing process. An example of how such a philosophy translates into real products is the NSK S-Max Pico, which has the smallest head and neck size of any handpiece on the market. NSK developed this device in response to requests from practices in Asian markets with high numbers of patients with smaller-than-average mouths. Interestingly, a bonus realised by the company’s willingness to address this need is that the S-Max Pico has gone on to also receive higher interest from paediatric practitioners throughout the world.

“We know there are other needs out there that aren’t being met,” Gochoel said. “We want to provide options based on what customers are asking for.”

Key to the company’s ability to develop equipment in direct response to customer need is its commitment to controlling the entire manufacturing process. Nearly 90 per cent of the 17,000-plus parts that go into the creation of its handpieces are manufactured in-house.

This commitment to controlling the entire manufacturing process is an advantage.”

Based in Japan, but a frequent traveller, Nakanishi described his core role at NSK as being to ensure the global organisation has a strong, motivated team in place with a clear understanding of what it takes to please customers.

“We have the engineering excellence needed to enable dental professionals to make their dream products real,” Nakanishi said. “We want to listen to the voices of dentists in order to develop very useful and wonderful products.”

Stiehle said that responding to specific customer demand is not limited to a product’s purpose and function. “It’s not just that we offer a product in every category of dentistry from a clinical point of view,” Stiehle said. “It also means offering a range of price points.”

Cost sensitivity also drives the company’s focus on providing one of the largest selections of coupler adapters available to make it easy for practitioners to test and purchase an NSK handpiece. “Our intent is to make it as easy as possible to integrate an NSK handpiece into the practice,” Gochoel said. “By being compatible with virtually all competitor coupler systems, we eliminate the need to buy a lot of additional couplers or incur the expense of retrofitting all the operators. It’s just one more example of a smart, customer-centric focus.”

Rounding out the commitment to quality assurance, pricing options and responsiveness is awareness that the ultimate customer is the patient. “I am a strong believer in the need to be aware that we are a medical device company, and that with that comes a huge responsibility, not just in terms of quality, but also comfort and safety of the patient,” Stiehle told Dental Tribune. “When I am sitting in the dentist’s chair, I want to make sure that I am worked on with the best product out there. That’s what is most important to us: the safety and comfort of the patient.”

Specialist dental clinic in Malaysia bought by Q&M

Daniel Zimmermann
DTI

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia/ SINGAPORE: One of South-East Asia’s largest dental groups is expanding its international chain of clinics. Q&M Dental Group in Malaysia has announced the acquisition of the White Smile Orthodontic Dental Braces Specialist Clinic in Kuala Lumpur, currently owned by orthodontic specialist Dr Reuben Azriel Hwee Ming. He has also agreed to practise exclusively for the group for the next two years, the report said.

The practice currently offers orthodontic treatment and other procedures like tooth whitening. On its website, it claims to be the first to have offered lingual braces treatment in Malaysia.

According to the Reuter Business Report, Dr Hwee agreed on Wednesday to transfer monetary assets worth 400,000 Ringgit (US$120,000) and his patients’ database to Q&M. He has also agreed to practise exclusively for the group for the next two years, the report said.

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The filter principle: Is every patient a finals patient?

Simon Hocken
UK

“Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do. If you haven’t found it yet, keep looking. Don’t settle. As with all matters of the heart, you’ll know when you find it. And, like any great relationship, it just gets better and better as the years roll on. So keep looking until you find it. Don’t settle.”

Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple Inc. in 2005

You remember finals, don’t you? Of course you do. Your examiners carefully selected a patient(s) for you to examine and diagnose and for whom to present a treatment plan. The finals patients were unlucky enough to have more than one dental problem and you were marked on finding all of them and your ability to determine a set of solutions for the patient.

Afterwards, most of us headed off into practice, where a series of finals patients are paraded in front of us on a daily basis. Now these patients willingly pay us to make our professional judgements, offer our best solutions and suggest a fee for doing the dentistry.

However, that’s not always what happens, is it?

There’s something that happens in general dental practice (be it public like the National Health Service [NHS] here in the UK, mixed or private practice) that is rarely spoken about in dental magazines, online forums or even at the bar at dental conferences. And it’s this: many dentists consult with, examine, diagnose and treatment plan their patients, not in the way that they did for their finals patient, but by applying some sort of filter—a filter of which the patients are completely unaware. Such filters have several elements and in my 25 years of being a dentist, followed by ten years of coaching dentists, I think I’ve probably heard or seen them all, or at least their effects.

The filter may have some or all of these components:
1. Will the patient like me if I tell him about all of this?
2. Will the patient come back if I tell him about all of this?
3. Will the patient think I am overprescribing?
4. (For returning patients) If I tell the patient about all of this now, will he wonder why on earth I haven’t mentioned it before?
5. Will the patient be willing to pay for all of this?
6. If I persuade the patient to have the big treatment plan, what happens if it goes wrong?
7. As long as I make a note on the records, I am keeping myself within the legal rules.

The enemy within here is fear, and not the patient’s but the clinician’s. And so the filter is applied and the patient is offered the treatment plan that the clinician believes is absolutely necessary or the one he feels the patient needs. Presumably, he leaves the rest until such treatment becomes (as he deems it) necessary or needed. An additional filter, of course, is the one that pushes the dentist towards offering treatments that are well paid or earn the most number of units of dental activity.
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Duty of care

I know that some of you will be wincing already at my comparison between a clinician and a mechanic: but there’s more mileage in this analogy still to come. After paying for just the service, you drive off from the garage with the faulty parts left unreported. A child runs out in front of your car and you don’t stop in time because of the worn tyres/damper pads/discs. In the investigation that follows, these things come to light and spark a witch-hunt.

A good garage owner dare not risk this and the inevitable damage to the garage’s reputation. He takes his duty of care seriously and must tell you exactly what the garage has found wrong with your car. So what’s really going wrong when a patient leaves a dental surgery with half a treatment plan? In my opinion, this happens because we’ve lost the simple, straightforward, trusting relationship between patient and clinician that we had as a final-year student. External circumstances such as insurance companies, the economy, the practice finances and, probably most importantly, our lack of confidence and self-esteem have filtered our behaviour so that we agree to compromise our professional skill set and integrity in order to be liked, keep the patient or stay within our comfort zone.

So, how does that sound? Not so great from where I’m sitting and let’s not tell the national newspapers. When I left the NHS in 1992, I decided to get rid of all the filters I had acquired, and simply show and tell my patients what I could do for them as if they were one of my family and money and time weren’t an issue. I’ve used exactly the same approach in my coaching practice. I was lucky enough to be mentored by some great coaches on the idea that you often do your best coaching just before you get fired (for telling it like it is). And that’s what I do for our clients.

In my view, you have to decide what sort of dentist you want to be: either an anxious single-unit, one-tooth-at-a-time dentist, forever destined to gross a thousand pounds a day, whilst complaining that patients don’t want your treatment; or a dentist who communicates clearly and straightforwardly with your patients about what you can see in their mouths and the best way to fix it, thereby giving them back their responsibility for their health and leaving the decision about whether to proceed with them.

Let me run this analogy past you.

Imagine taking your three-year-old, £25,000 car in for a 50,000-mile service. During the course of this, the technician discovers that as well as the regular service items needed, your car also has two sets of worn brake pads. In addition, the front brake discs are warped, the rear dampers are leaking and two tyres are nearly at their worn-out marks.

As a customer, which of these phone calls would you like the garage to make?

1. The call that lists the faults, your options and the costs for having everything put right?
2. The call that tells you about the faults they think you will want to hear?
3. The call that tells you about the faults that you will be able to see?
4. The call that tells you about the faults they think you will be willing to have fixed?
5. The call that tells you about the faults that will earn them the biggest margin?

And what will the garage do about the faults they don’t tell you about? Perhaps, put a ‘watch’ on their records and consider telling you at the next service?

2. The call that tells you about the biggest margin?

3. The call that tells you about the faults they think you will want to hear?

4. The call that tells you about the faults they think you will be willing to have fixed?

5. The call that tells you about the faults that will earn them the biggest margin?

We agree to compromise our professional skill set and integrity in order to be liked.

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A minimally invasive restoration of worn teeth

Juan Manuel Liñares Sixto
Spain

Composites were first used as restorative dental materials during the 1960s. Since then, their field of application has been significantly expanded to include indications in both the anterior and posterior region.

Modern materials allow the fabrication of highly aesthetic restorations with minimal loss of tooth structure. This is a clear advantage, as it has become an overriding objective for many dentists to keep the biological cost of restorations to a minimum.

Composite materials are successfully used for anterior restorations to reconstruct lost tooth structure caused by various lesions, fractures or wear processes. They are also suited for complex rehabilitations that have to meet exacting aesthetic requirements, such as the closure of diastemas or the realignment of teeth.

Nowadays, dental professionals can choose from a wealth of composite material systems offered by plenty of manufacturers. Ideally, the physico-chemical properties of the material should ensure easy handling and provide optical characteristics that allow the healthy natural teeth to be mimicked accurately. Detailed knowledge of the material properties and strict adherence to the instructions for use and the adhesive protocol are essential to achieve predictable and durable results that satisfy both the patient and the dentist.

Tooth wear, that is, the progressive loss of tooth structure, is a frequently occurring problem among today’s population. The reasons for tooth wear vary. One reason is bruxism and it is difficult to determine how widespread bruxism is. Dental professionals, however, are increasingly faced with the challenge of finding a minimally invasive treatment option for patients who suffer from this condition.

Case report

A 27-year-old female patient came to our practice with her upper anterior teeth showing signs of severe attrition (Fig. 1). She told us that her central incisors had been getting smaller over the past two years and their shape had been changing. We found that teeth grinding during sleep was responsible for the attrition.

The patient wanted the progressive tooth wear to be stopped and the original shape of her teeth restored. At the beginning, clinical and radiological examinations were carried out and the initial situation was documented with photographs. Subsequently, study models were fabricated and mounted on a semi-adjustable articulator. As the canine guidance and lateral movements of the teeth were found to work perfectly and the patient was of a relatively young age, we opted for a minimally invasive treatment option.

Only the incisal third of the upper anterior teeth should be restored with composite. The function and anatomy of the teeth were evaluated using a diagnostic wax-up (Fig. 3). The envisaged result was simulated in the oral cavity with a silicone key, which allowed the patient to view the aesthetic and functional characteristics before beginning restorative treatment. Silicone keys are generally useful as a reference to reproduce the shape of the tooth as determined at the beginning of the treatment.

After the patient had been appropriately informed of the treatment, the restorative procedure was commenced.

As the first step, the incisal edge was given a slight bevel. Care was taken to remove as little tooth structure as possible and yet to achieve optimum retention and ensure an accurate fit of the restoration. As the next step, the enamel areas were etched with phosphoric acid and ExciTE F adhesive (Ivoclar Vivadent) was applied (Fig. 3).

In this case, we decided to use the IPS Empress Direct composite system (Ivoclar Vivadent). The materials were applied in layers using the silicone key fabricated beforehand. The silicone key enabled us to reproduce the anatomical characteristics of the tooth as true to nature as possible (Fig. 4). To build up the tooth shade, we
decided to use shade A1 Enamel to achieve increased brightness and a halo effect in the incisal third and create intensely translucent areas. Shades A2 and A1 Dentin were selected to simulate the mamelons. Some of the material extended into the bevelled enamel edges to mask the transition between the tooth and restoration. The grooves between the mamelons were filled with Trans Opal. Finally, the restoration was covered with a thin coating of Trans 30. This layer also extended into the bevelling (Fig. 5).

Each individual composite layer was polymerised with a bluephase curing light for ten seconds using the High Power mode. Upon completion of the layering procedure, the restoration was finished using multiblade burs and aluminium oxide discs. Finally, the restoration was carefully polished using the three-step Astro-pol polishing system (Ivoclar Vivadent), felt discs and aluminium paste until the desired high-gloss surface was attained (Fig. 6).

The incisal third of the upper lateral incisors was built up using the same procedure to achieve the appropriate anatomical and functional characteristics (Figs. 7 & 8).

Although the anterior guidance was re-established, parafunctional activity may still occur. Therefore, the patient received a night guard. Bruxism may compromise the outcome and durability of any restoration, no matter how well designed. Detailed knowledge of the material in use, the tooth anatomy, shade design and occlusion, among other things, were instrumental in achieving the optically pleasing result in this case (Figs. 9 & 10).
Numbers increase for sixth Singapore dental show

SINGAPORE: This year's International Dental Exhibition and Meeting in Singapore will welcome a number of new faces to Asia's largest dental meeting. Several companies from around the globe have announced their first ever participation at the biennial event, which will be held at the end of April.

Among the new exhibitors will be dental heavyweights Astra Tech and Biomet 3i, as well as specialist companies like Roland DG, a milling machine manufacturer from Japan, and the Finnish clinical furniture company Salli, the organiser said. In total, over 380 manufacturers and dealers have registered for the three-day event, including large joint participations from players operating in key dental markets like Germany, Italy, South Korea and the USA. In addition to new implant systems, dental instruments and the latest restorative materials, advanced digital dentistry solutions will be on display.

With over 6,000 trade visitors in 2010, IDEM Singapore has become one of the largest dental shows for the ASEAN and APAC region. Recently recognised as "Trade Conference of the Year" by the country's Tourism Board at the Singapore Experience Award 2011, it was launched in 2000 with the participation of approximately 200 exhibitors. This year's show will be held from 20 to 22 April at the Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre.

"Demand for advanced dental care and services is growing in Asia. In addition to a more affluent population and increasing awareness in oral health, Asia's growing sophistication in dental treatment is also attracting patients from other parts of the world," said Michael Dreyer, Asia-Pacific Vice-President for Koelnmesse, the organiser. "IDEM Singapore 2012 continues to be an important platform that will bring innovations from the West to Asian dental practitioners, while opening up opportunities in regional markets to players from the West."

According to the 2010 visitor survey, almost two-thirds of all visitors were from outside Singapore with many coming from neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Half of them were dentists while the other half were dental nurses, dental technicians or dental students.

Singapore Dental Association President Dr Philip Goh said that in addition to the larger exhibition, IDEM's scientific programme aims to help dental professionals keep pace with the rapidly advancing innovations in the field. He added that attendees will be able to earn up to 30 continuing professional education points by attending the seminars and workshops held during the show.

Titled "Advances and Controversies", the conference programme will include such topics as trends in the non-surgical treatment of periodontitis, the prevention and control of early caries, and implant therapy in the aesthetic zone. For the first time, IDEM will offer a post-congress workshop (sponsored by Invisalign) on Monday, 23 April.

The educational offering will be complemented by the second forum organised by the Dental Tribune Study Club.

SHOFU recognizes the development of new clinical techniques in minimally invasive cosmetic dentistry (MiCD) procedures and is fully committed to support the MiCD movement through the contribution in developing and providing dental professionals with newer aesthetic biocompatible materials to achieve their goals.

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