on personal beliefs, cultural influences, esthetic trends and fashion, and input from the media. Hence, smile esthetics is a multifaceted issue, which needs to be adequately addressed for any esthetic treatment. The objective beauty of a smile can be established with the application of various principles of smile design, and the creation of subjective beauty may enhance cosmetic value.15

Smile design
Smile design has been defined in various ways in the literature; I would like to summarise it as follows: “Smile design is a systematic process governed by the psychology, health, function and rules of natural esthetics to bring about some changes in soft- and hard-oral tissue within anatomical, physiological and psychological limitations, thereby creating a positive influence on the overall esthetics of a person’s face and personality as a whole”.2

We all appreciate a beautiful smile when we see it, but it is difficult to explain exactly what makes a smile beautiful. It is evident that a pleasing smile depends on the following features: the quality of the dental and gingival components, their conformity to the rules of structural beauty, the relationship between teeth and lips, and their harmonious integration with the facial components.8

Overall facial beauty and smile esthetics are normally judged by psychological aspects — perception, personality, desire — the state of health, the mathematical ratio of the facial, dento-facial and dentogingival components. The psychological aspects are highly subjective and fluctuate constantly because of identity, peer and media pressure. Hence, the only objective method of aesthetic estimation is mathematical.

Indeed, mathematics has been considered the only frame of reference for comprehending nature. Therefore, the cosmetic dentist needs to be familiar with various mathematical and geometric concepts for achieving smile esthetics and their clinical protocols.

The Smile Design Wheel
For any smile design procedure, the clinician needs to consider the elements of the smile design pyramids — psychology, health, function and esthetics (PHFA), listed here according to order of importance.7 It is necessary to determine the patient’s psychological status, establish a healthy oral environment, restore function and then give attention to enhancing the aesthetic aspect. All four pyramids should be accorded equal importance to achieve a desirable clinical result. By integrating these PHFA pyramids, I developed the Smile Design Wheel (Fig. 1), in which each pyramid is subdivided into three related zones. The Smile Design Wheel was devised as a simple guide to the most important components of smile design, their clinical significance and sequence to be maintained during the smile design procedure. I believe that the Smile Design Wheel will help clinicians to easily comprehend the “complex” smile design procedures of esthetic dentistry. In the next section, I will briefly explain the Smile Design Wheel protocols with PHFA pyramids assessment and their basic objectives.

Step No. 1: Understand the pyramids of psychology
According to Prof. Robert A. Baron, psychology is best defined as the science of behaviour and cognitive processes. Behaviour deals with any action or reaction of a living organism that can be observed or measured.

Cognitive processes deal with every aspect of our mental life: our thoughts, memories, mental images, reasoning, decision-making, and so on, in short, with all aspects of the human mind.

In smile design, we normally try to understand the second part of psychology, i.e., the human mind or rather the minds of our patients. There are three fundamental zones we consider in detail for the psychological pyramid assessment: perception, personality and desire.
Desire

Desire is a subjective component. Increased public awareness of smile esthetics through the media has lead to a rapid increase in patients’ desires and levels of expectation. Patients are now willing to pay for the enhancement of their smile esthetics. Therefore, the ethical responsibilities of cosmetic dentists in identifying the need- or want-based desires of patients have also increased. The desires and levels of expectation in many patients are higher than what is clinically achievable, and it is the clinician’s duty to explain and guide patients towards a realistic esthetic goal.

The psychological assessment of any person is very subjective; however, aspects like perception, personality, expectation or desire are important for the smile design procedure.

Patient satisfaction is closely related to these aspects. Hence, understanding the pyramid of psychology is an integral aspect in smile design.

Step No. 2: Establish the pyramid of health

The pyramid of health is divided into three zones: general health, specific health and dento-gingival health. The health pyramid assessment and its management play a vital role in most cases, as patients may have certain limitations owing to their health, such as uncontrolled diabetes, soft-tissue pathology, poor bone structure, poor oral hygiene, tooth decay, periodontal disease etc., which should be addressed prior to functional and esthetic treatment.

The health pyramid assessment process includes patient history (medical, dental, nutritional), examinations (extra-oral, intra-oral) and investigations (radiographs, pulp vitality test, study models analysis).

Various types of questionnaires and clinical examination and investigations protocols can be used to obtain the necessary information relating to the patient’s health.

The clinician can use this information to prepare a personalised treatment protocol. All three components of the pyramid of health should be established within normal limits before starting any esthetic restorative procedure on a patient.

Step No. 5: Restore the pyramid of function

Function is related to force and movement. Hence, for the pyramid of function assessment, the existing occlusion, comfort and phonetics are properly examined with the evaluation of para-functional habits, level of comfort during chewing and deglutition, and temporomandibular joint movement.

The clarity of normal speech and pronunciation are also examined. The occlusion, comfort and phonetic components of the functional pyramid should be restored and maintained at an acceptable level before starting the treatment of any esthetic component.

Step No. 4: Enhance the pyramid of esthetics

The pyramid of esthetics is the last fundamental: facial midline; facial ratios; centrals (tooth size ratio); principle components is done using various facial photographs with geometric and mathematical appraisals, using reference points and their interrelation.

Various facial reference points and guidelines are used for esthetic assessment for orthognathic and facial cosmetic surgery; however, in smile design the following macro-esthetic guidelines are considered fundamental: facial midline; facial thirds; interpupillary line; nasolabial angle; and Rickett’s E-plane.

Mini-esthetics

Mini-esthetics deals with the esthetic correlation of the lips, teeth and gums at rest and in smile position (Fig. 7). The esthetic correlation can be appreciated properly when viewed at a closer distance than the visual macro-esthetics distance.

The visual mini-esthetics distance is similar to the across-the-table distance, which is normally within 2 to 5 feet. There are various guidelines in esthetics based on the relationship and ratio between lips, teeth and gingival tissue. These can be analysed during mini-esthetic assessment using frontal, vertical and transverse characteristics of the smile. Clinical photographs are the basic tools for mini-esthetic analysis. The smile can be analysed at rest (M-position) or smile (E-position).

In the M-position, the following references are measured and analysed: commissure height; philtrum height; and visibility of the maxillary incisors.

In E-position the following references should be analysed: smile arc (line); dental midline; smile symmetry; buccal corridor; display zone and teeth visibility; smile index; and lip line.

Micro-esthetics

Micro-esthetics deals with the fine structure of dental and gingival esthetics (Fig. 8). Mini-esthetics can be appreciated at a visual micro-esthetic distance of less than 2 feet or within normal make-up distance.

For the clinical assessment of micro-esthetic components of the teeth and gingival tissue, appropriate illumination and magnification tools are required for intra-oral examination. Necessary clinical intra-oral photographs should be taken for documentation and future reference.

For micro-esthetics, the detail of the individual tooth structure and its relation to the surrounding gum and the adjacent teeth should be analysed. The following are the major points to be considered: upper centrals (tooth size ratio); principle

Macro-esthetics

Macro-esthetics deals with the overall structure of the face and its relation to the smile (Fig. 6). To appreciate the macro-esthetic components of any smile, the visual macro-esthetics distance should be more than 5 feet.

However, in clinical practice the assessment of the macro-esthetic components is done using various facial photographs with geometric and mathematical appraisals, using reference points and their interrelation.

Macro-esthetics is of prime importance in the great majority of patients.
of golden ratio; axial inclination; incisal embrasures; contact point progression; connector progression; shade progression; and surface micro-texture.

In smile design, the esthetic conditions related to gingival health and appearance are an essential component. The gingival shape, position, embrasure and contour in relation to the teeth are interdependent. The following are major aspects that should be addressed during smile design to achieve gingival or pink esthetics: gingival shape; gingival contour; gingival embrasure; gingival zenith; and gingival height (position or level).

To achieve higher patient satisfaction and long-lasting treatment results, the following should be the sequence in any smile design procedure: proper comprehension of psychological aspects, the establishment of health and the restoration of function within its normal limit, and the subsequent enhancement of esthetic components.

Conclusion

Today, various protocols of smile design are available in cosmetic dentistry. However, most clinicians wish to use the simplest protocol with the most predictable results.

It is to be noted that smile design should always be a multifactorial decision-making process that allows the clinician to treat patients with an individualized and interdisciplinary approach.

The Smile Design Wheel presented in this article clearly indicates the most important components (PHFA pyramids) of smile design, their clinical significance and sequence to be maintained during the smile design procedure.

I believe that the Smile Design Wheel is a simple and practical protocol in smile design that can help the clinician to easily comprehend the ‘complex’ smile design procedures of esthetic dentistry.}

About the author

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