The Dental Button reduces patient anxiety

Imagine your patients saying, “This is the first time in 50 years I’ve felt comfortable in the dentist’s chair,” or “I can’t wait to tell my friends about this” or better yet, “I’ll never switch dentists again.” These are actual quotes from patients who experienced The Dental Button® for the first time.

The Dental Button seems almost too good to be true, but it actually puts the patient in control. It allows them to stop the drill if they feel anxiety, discomfort or simply need a break. Giving patients this unprecedented control reduces their anxiety by 50–80 percent and up to 100 percent in extremely fearful patients.

“Many people feel they have no control over treatment when they’re sitting in the dental chair. This perceived lack of control often leads to increased anxiety, creating significant stress for both the patient and dentist,” said Lisa Heaton, PhD.

Heaton is a clinical psychologist who studies dental anxiety and treats fearful dental patients at the University of Washington’s Dental Fears Research Clinic, which is the only one of its kind in the United States and one of only a handful in the world.

So you might be wondering, “Don’t patients press the button all the time?” That’s actually the dentists’ most frequently asked question, and the answer is, “No. Patients rarely press it.” Most times, knowing they have control is enough to relax them. As their anxiety decreases, so does their perception of pain.

The same psychology that gave us the morphine pump in the medical field was the concept for The Dental Button. Those studies found that when patients can control their medication, they use less of it, recover faster and experience less pain.

In addition, because 85 percent of the adult population suffers some form of dental anxiety, from minor to phobic, The Dental Button is increasing access to care for millions of fearful patients.

Another popular question is, “Why can’t patients just raise their hand?” The answer is simply that it’s an issue of control. The dentist still must be the one to physically stop the drill. Since the patient shares no control, anxiety isn’t decreased and the increased movement is potentially more dangerous.

Dental anxiety has been the subject of research for decades. Heaton, along with her colleague, Timothy A. Smith, PhD, wanted to know if all the advances in dentistry over the last 50 years have had any impact on dental anxiety. Their article entitled, “Fear of dental care: Are we making any progress?” was published in JADA in 2003.

They found that despite the use of sedation, better anesthetics and relaxation techniques, today’s patients were as anxious about going to the dentist as they were in the late 1960s. The Dental Button, however, is helping change that.

“Methods that give patients more control over dental treatment, such as The Dental Button, may decrease patients’ anxiety and make treatment easier for the patient and dental team,” said Heaton.

During an 18-month trial, hundreds of dental patients rated their anxiety levels on a scale of one to 10. The majority reported a six or seven, but after they were given the opportunity to use The Dental Button, those same patients reported a drop in their anxiety level to a two or three.

Practices offering The Dental Button generally see a 15 percent
increase in business, according to the company. Dr. Mike White of Webster Dental Care in St. Louis aggressively markets his practice and his use of this product. He has seen a 45 percent increase in business, setting new patient records three months in a row.

White credits The Dental Button and the resulting word-of-mouth referrals, “We give The Dental Button to 20–30 patients a day and it may be pressed only once a month. The notion that patients are always pressing the button and slowing procedures is a myth.”

Michael Edwards, DMD, inventor of The Dental Button, said the increasing popularity of this product shows patients want choice. By offering The Dental Button, dentists show they’re concerned about their patients’ total well-being.

“Patients have plenty of options but want to find a dentist who cares about how they feel. Caring is how patients differentiate between practices, not who has the more-filled resin or whose crowns have better wear characteristics,” said Edwards.

The Dental Button is particularly popular with Baby Boomers who grew up during a time when dentistry wasn’t always as gentle as it is today. Many of today’s Baby Boomers are still trying to get over their childhood anxieties.

To learn more about The Dental Button and to see how it works, visit booth No. 1450 at the 2010 ADA’s Annual Session, Oct. 9–12 in Orlando, Fla. Not going to the meeting? Go to www.thedentalbutton.com or call HSI at (800) 572-4546.

iPhone Dental Practice Monitor (iDPM) v2.1 from Sikka Software, available exclusively at the Apple app store, can display appointments, benchmarking and key performance indicators from your practice automatically, and best of all, it’s absolutely free.

This enhanced version further simplifies accessing percentile benchmarking data from more than 6,400 installations of Sikka and key performance indicators for all major dental practice business ratios. You can also view details of the application, partners and breakthrough dental optimization applications.

Enhancements include the ability to automatically read appointments, procedures to be performed and expected production on your iPhone or iPod. You can also review offline and online key performance indicators and benchmarking numbers in both tabular and graphical form.

Sikka continues to improve this application and plans to add many more capabilities in the future. Desktop Dental Practice Monitor™ (available free from www.dentalpracticemonitor.com) should be