Picture perfect for NOW launch

The British Orthodontic Society launched the first ever National Orthodontic Week last week in London Dental Tribune was there.

It’s not the worst start to the week when you get to spend it in the calm surroundings of the National Portrait Gallery in London’s Trafalgar Square, looking at some of the most famous faces in the 20th Century photographed by Irving Penn. This is where I found myself at the launch of National Orthodontic Week, the brainchild of the British Orthodontic Society.

This event, newly launched for 2010, is aiming to raise the awareness of the benefits of orthodontics to the public and highlight the options available to patients.

NOW was launched in a presentation given by BOS chair Nigel Harradine, where he likened the importance of the face in portraits to the fascination of orthodontists in aspects of the face. One of Penn’s most famous photos was of Picasso, and Dr Harradine used a famous quote of Picasso’s, where he said ‘Photographers, along with dentists, are the two professions never satisfied with what they do. Every dentist would like to be a doctor and inside every photographer is a painter trying to get out!’

Nigel took the quote very tongue in cheek – as he said he was very proud to be a dentist and an orthodontist and wouldn’t want to be anything else – and his lively style kept the audience amused as he detailed what NOW had been established to achieve. He showed some case presentations of how orthodontics had been able to change not just the dentition and the facial shape of his patients, but their self-esteem and quality of life. This, he said, was one of the most fundamental aspects of orthodontic treatment – it was not only about the physical benefits, rather the effect of treatment on the psychology of patients that mattered.

One of the main focus points of the NOW campaign is the website (www.nowsmile.org). Nigel gave a quick tour of the site and recommended the use of it for both patients and practitioners. Its bright colours and easy to follow menu is very engaging, whilst still focusing attention on the ways the look and function of teeth can be improved; and providing clear and impartial information about orthodontic treatment to encourage patients to find out more.

To highlight the need for orthodontic treatment in the UK, BOS had commissioned a YouGov survey to highlight people’s impressions about their teeth. The survey canvassed the opinions of 2,050 people split into eight categories according to sex, age, social status, geographical location, working status, marital status and number of children in the household. The findings reveal that:

- 45 per cent of UK adults are unhappy with the appearance of their teeth
- 20 per cent of UK adults would consider having some form of orthodontic treatment to improve the alignment and appearance of their teeth
- Of the adults who felt orthodontic treatment would be of benefit:
  - 56 per cent would contemplate treatment for an improvement in appearance
  - 25 per cent for an improvement in self-esteem
  - 18 per cent for an improvement in oral health and function.

Commenting on the survey, Nigel said: “We already had evidence from several studies which indicates that one third of all children assessed at the age of 12 have a significant need for orthodontic treatment, and now this survey shows that 20 per cent of adults are unhappy with the alignment and appearance of their teeth and would consider having orthodontic treatment. Such findings corroborate anecdotal evidence from orthodontists who are experiencing a significant increase in enquiries from adults who may not have had an opportunity to correct their bite and their smile earlier in life. This reflects both a change in attitude towards orthodontic treatment and recent advances in treatment techniques”.

Nigel mentioned that many orthodontic practices had whole-heartedly taken up the mantle of NOW, with fundraising and awareness campaigns in their practices as well as purchasing some of the merchandising and apparel available to promote the event.

National Orthodontic Week ran from 22-28 March and to find out more visit www.nowsmile.org or www.bos.org.uk.