The heart of dentistry

Andrew McCance offers some advice on how to motivate patients to develop better oral health

The state of the nation’s oral health is a concern for all those involved in the dental profession. Finding ways to improve the standard of oral hygiene regimes through new techniques, cleaning aids and initiatives, has played a role in raising awareness about the importance of brushing twice a day and cleaning interdentally, as well as regular visits to the dentist.

Attracting patients

Encouraging patients to maintain a regular cycle of examinations is certainly a challenge for clinicians, especially in troubled economic times such as these. With the prospect of another shake-up in the contractual arrangements between PCTs and practice owners, developing ways of getting fee-paying patients through the door might well make all the difference.

For instance, one dentist in Manchester took the unusual step of providing a taxi service to get patients to their appointments. As a result, they claimed to have generated a 30 per cent fall in missed appointments, representing a significant saving for the practice, as well as ensuring patients got the check-ups vital for preventive dentistry.

A good deal

Patients appreciate a good deal, and so offering a package of both general and more specialised dental care at a discounted rate, with a monthly membership fee is another alternative. The patients feel encouraged to take full advantage of the treatments available, whilst the practice benefits from a regular source of income.

Preventive dentistry is the current focus for Government initiatives. Getting patients to take better care of their teeth is a challenge, but one which is made easier when the patient has a smile of which they can be proud.

Offering a way to correct a patient’s malocclusion that doesn’t involve fixed appliances is certainly appealing for many patients. This market does not have the same perceived limitations of such orthodontic treatment methods, the once traditional mechanics, the once considered drawbacks of rubber bands, the inconvenience and interdental cleaning.

An invisible solution

Developed by experts in orthodontics, the Clearstep system offers a complete, ‘invisible’ orthodontic treatment methodology for patients from the age of seven upwards. By adopting a hybrid approach, combining clear positioners with traditional mechanics, the once perceived limitations of such removable positioners have been overcome.

As a result, clinicians can offer the best results at an attractive price while keeping treatment times to a minimum.

The benefits are not just subjective and abstract. According to a recent study, both general dental practitioners and orthodontists rate the positive effect of orthodontic treatment on the overall oral health as quite high. So clinicians have a way of helping to improve not only a patient’s smile, but also their dental health.

It would seem that the overriding influence in preventing gum disease would appear to be patient motivation and so the argument returns to the initial question: how to encourage patients to visit their dentist regularly, and to maintain an effective oral healthcare regime?

Maintaining good results

It stands to reason that a patient will be more inclined to keep their teeth in a better condition if they looked good in the first place. Moreover, if they have invested both time and financial resources into achieving their new and improved smile, they will be far more likely to want to maintain the positive results that have been achieved.

Regular assessment appointment forms an integral part of the system. These not only give the opportunity for clinicians to assess the progress of the treatment, they also provide the chance to monitor more closely the overall oral health of the patient: an important aspect of preventative dentistry.

One of the advantages of a removable appliance is that a normal cleaning routine can be maintained, with the positioner removed to allow access for brushing and interdental cleaning.

Looking after the oral health of our patients is at the heart of dentistry. With the Clearstep System, clinicians have access to an innovative system that tackles a range of malocclusions in a way that allows patients to keep up their usual daily oral health routines with ease.