With more than half the adult population of the UK believed to suffer from bruxism, it’s no surprise that dentists who are aware of the condition report that up to 85% of their patients present the symptoms associated with persistent clenching and tooth grinding. However, since bruxing is generally sleep-related, the patient is frequently unaware of his/her unconscious oral movements, and all too often the dentist will assume their tooth wear is the result of ageing or normal mastication.

Dentists whose patients present with unusual sensitivity to pain or pressure should immediately suspect bruxism and check the dentition for stress fractures, cusp fractures and abfractions. Once the telltale signs of bruxism have been identified, the traditional dental solution has been often an occlusal splint, which separates the molars by a layer of hard plastic, to prevent damage to the teeth. However, for those patients whose clenching on the layer of plastic continues to be problematic, a new design of device, that provides a biting surface on the front teeth only, has shown to be highly successful. In order for highly intense clenching or grinding to occur, the back teeth must be in contact with each other, or on a provided substrate, like the traditional dental splint. The new design, termed an “NTI device” prevents the back teeth from touching each other, thereby keeping clenching and grinding intensity to a fraction of its potential.

Realising the low levels of awareness of bruxism among both the public and dental clinicians, staff at S4S, the exclusive supplier of the NTI-tss mini anterior Bruxism splint, decided to take action, and in October 2010 inaugurated the first ever Bruxism Awareness Week. S4S Commercial Director Neil Bullement explains:

Myself and Technical Director Matt Everatt were very keen to create an event to highlight Bruxism because it so often goes undiagnosed and causes a great deal of unnecessary suffering. We produce occlusal splints in our laboratory and had already sponsored training for GDPs in this area, so we thought the next step was to go national and really make people aware of the condition. We decided that the best way to do this was to make dentists themselves more aware of bruxism so that they, in turn, could help their patients.

We encouraged dentists to attend training courses on the use of splints and gave out ‘Bruxism Awareness’ packs, which contained marketing materials such as posters, patient information leaflets and badges. The initiative was a massive success. We had requests from 200 different practitioners for packs and estimate that up to 350 practices participated in the event. During the first Bruxism Awareness Week S4S also raised more than £500 for Help 4 Heroes, a charity that supports wounded service men and women, as service personnel frequently suffer with the condition.

Bruxism Awareness Week this year will run from 24th – 30th October and repeat the successful format of 2010 but on a larger scale. To learn more about Bruxism Awareness Week or to request a free information and promotion pack, please contact S4S on: 0114 250 0176 or email: info@s4sdental.com