

Let the Sun Shine In

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Sunlight is the source of power that fuels much of life. The fact that it is in such short supply at this time of year affects us all. This human reaction has led to many major cultural and religious festivals throughout history being placed in the darkest months of the year, in order to keep our moods and energy levels up.

Light plays an integral role in our daily lives as dentists, as well. We require it for diagnosis, manipulation of our restorative materials, documentation of our procedures and now, increasingly for the newest treatment modalities, including laser biostimulation and photo-activated disinfection.

Many tools have been developed to harness the power of light in our dental practices. We can use this power to implement the new paradigm of healing dentistry where we can detect disease earlier and alter its course in ways thought impossible just a few years ago. As oral health practitioners, we can be more proactive in healing dental and gingival tissues with a minimally invasive approach that does not always involve surgery.

New caries detection systems, that use the differential light scattering properties of diseased and intact dental tissues, give us the ability to track caries progress. New remineralizing treatment protocols can be undertaken and their effectiveness properly evaluated using these scientific measuring tools. Patients can participate in the process and monitor their own progress in a

way not possible with conventional “preventive dentistry”.

New user-friendly diode lasers are now utilized by general dentists to enhance their ability to treat periodontal disease. This is an effective, minimally invasive procedure that can delay or even eliminate the need for surgical treatment.

Low level lasers have a wide range of dental applications from improving wound healing to decreasing dentin hypersensitivity. They have been used in medicine for many years, and have been shown to be very effective in healing chronic wounds that do not readily respond to traditional treatment. We have only scratched the surface of potential applications for this treatment modality in the dental office.

Photo-activated disinfection can be used to decontaminate both hard and soft tissues. Eliminating the bacterial component of caries will kick-start the healing process and create the environment for remineralization. This effectively stops the disease process and can heal the lesion.

All these new tools allow us to treat our patients in a more effective, scientific and yet gentler manner. It is a win-win all around!

This is a good time of year for reflection. We have just gone through a very tough patch economically, and are looking for “the light at the end of the tunnel”. As dentists, we have much to be thankful for. We are in a profession that provides us the oppor-



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tunity to improve our patients' lives through health, function and esthetics, and be properly remunerated for it.

Let's take a moment to reflect on how truly fortunate we are.

Let the sun shine in...to your offices, to your lives and to your families.

Happy Holidays!