

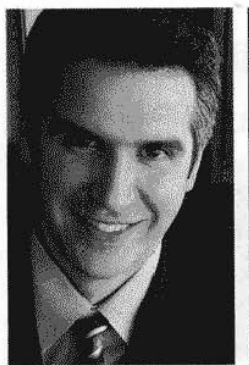
EDITOR'S

NOTE

Let there be light

Sometimes the best perspective I can give you is that of a dental patient. And as your patient I want to tell you, I wish you had a laser.

I recently spent a weekend in Chicago with a group of clinicians on the leading edge of laser dentistry. They were professionals who are excited about dentistry and the potential for technological advancements to change the face of patient care and dental practice. These early adopters are creating their own paradigm in periodontal care, restorative and esthetic dentistry and more.



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Their spirit was infectious. The first night of the conference, I called my dentist (who also happens to be one of my best friends, the guitarist in my band and the man who introduced me to my fiancée) and gushed about what I had seen. My friend's take on lasers is what I've heard from many dentists: That's a lot of money.

I addressed that concern with many of the dentists at the conference—both laser users and those considering the investment. In my seven years covering dentistry, I've heard lots of frustrated clinicians tell me about the supposed technological innovations sitting in their closets. Not so in this case, they said.

Those who've embraced lasers say the units paid for themselves ahead of schedule. More importantly, they all reported a practice reinvigoration they say could never be measured in dollars.

My job gives me a unique perspective: I'm an extremely well-informed dental patient. So I told my friend what I saw from that point of view. I saw Class-V preps completed in under five minutes with no anesthesia and no collateral damage to the surrounding tooth structure. I saw lesions removed and frenectomies performed bloodlessly and in moments. I saw the promise of excellent care with little pain for patients and expanded treatment potential for general dentists. As a patient and dental advocate, that all looks good to me.

Dental lasers have been around for more than a decade, but their potential is just now coming to light. Many say the clinical evidence is not yet there to support their use over traditional clinical methods. That, along with the high cost of entry, does a lot to explain the less than 4-percent market penetration. The clinical evidence is coming, and these committed, spirited clinicians are finding new potential for lasers every day: crown preps and implants included.

I'm not suggesting you run out and buy a laser. I'm saying the same thing I told my friend: This is worth looking into. I encourage any growth-minded dentist to pay attention.

Wondering where to look for more information? Well, start here. This magazine has long led the curve in covering dental technology and the clinical and management challenges raised by innovation. This month's installment of Bob Kehoe's three-part guide to implementing digital radiography is a perfect example, as is Dan McCann's feature, "Perio success."

Deciding how you spend your money, time and energy is the primary challenge of practice management. We're determined to continue providing they type of in-depth coverage that will help you make the best decisions for the success of your practice.

Dental Practice REPORT

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