

The Fit 4 Prevention Mindset:

4) Dentine hypersensitivity – your competitive advantage, or the enemy who comes between you and your patients?

If you help to relieve your patients from the pain of dentine hypersensitivity (DHS), you will stand a tremendous competitive advantage in terms of patient satisfaction, as the condition affects up to 57% of the general population.

Always focus on DHS in your practice, in order to:

- Improve your patients' quality of life and their enjoyment of food and drink.
- Make their visits to your dental office more effective, comfortable and less anxiety-inducing.
- Avoid unfair blame. Periodontal treatment triggers DHS in up to 90% of patients. If you don't warn them, and provide a solution, you can be blamed for this pain!
- Prevent the vicious cycle, where painful tooth-brushing causes inadequate oral hygiene, progressive gingival recession and worsening DHS.

Dialogue is essential. What are the clues you have a DHS patient in your chair?

- Be proactive! Remember DHS is the 'silent pain'. The patient feels pain, discomfort and anxiety – but normally they don't realize that DHS is the cause.
- Ask questions, listen and try to understand what the patients are not telling you; practice attentive dialogue – and explain: "Doctor I feel pain when I drink cold water." "Does it disappear quickly after you swallow the water?" "Yes it does." "It sounds like you might suffer from sensitive teeth. Did you know we can help relieve that pain?"

Put in place an assessment and management plan for DHS sufferers

- **Teamwork** between dentists and dental hygienists is essential.
- **Make a formal diagnosis through exclusion:** caries, pulpitis, dental fractures, cracked tooth syndrome and incongruous or infiltrated restorations, all need to be ruled-out (among others).
- **Assess DHS type and severity:** What are the stimuli that cause the pain and their severity? Evaluate on a VAS scale using a) air blast, b) tactile stimulation and c) a cold water syringe.
- **What are the cause(s) and predisposing factors:** Is it gingival recession, abrasion or erosion?
- **Explain the problems and solutions fully:** Recommend a soft toothbrush for cleaning with low pressure.
- **Recommend a daily toothpaste that fights the root cause of DHS:** (e.g. Colgate® Sensitive Pro-Relief™ or elmex® Sensitive Professional™). Colgate® Sensitive Pro-Relief™ and elmex® Sensitive Professional™ both contain the Pro-Argin™ Technology and are clinically proven to provide long-lasting pain relief from the first use, together with the recommended level of fluoride.
- **Monitor success with a control visit and an interview:** Engage the patient in active dialogue again. Ask about the intensity and frequency of DHS symptoms and measure the VAS scores for the different stimuli again. If the results show a good improvement, set up maintenance therapy. **If the patient is happy – you're happy!**

