Editorial

Eco-friendly Dentistry

This issue of the journal saw a clamor of research work by postgraduates; it is always a pleasure to publish an encourage research undertaken by students. Research always is the backbone to any scientific endeavor. As my mind meandered in the area, I was wondering about one area of research or focus for the future and that would be "greener" dentistry; the reduce, reuse, recycle mantra would focus more on dentistry in the years to come. It has been said that it is not possible to have healthy people on a sick planet. Reducing waste, changing patterns of consumption, and limiting the amount of adverse chemicals entering the breathable air of a dental office are achievable and realistic goals for the future. For this reason, more research is needed to find cost-effective environmental alternatives in dentistry.

Minimizing your environmental footprint is a positive trend occurring within dentistry with the adoption of environmentally friendly strategies. These strategies would include the selection and use of products that are biodegradable and have less toxic byproducts, such as volatile organic compounds (VOCs) or replacing disposable items that can be reused, recycling used dental instruments, reducing water and energy consumption, choosing products that consume fewer resources to manufacture, and recycling waste from the dental practice. Manufacturers also have initiated strategies to provide products that are more eco-friendly. Dentists should take a leading role in society by implementing "green" initiatives to lessen their impact on the environment by following "green" recommendations.

Some green recommendations are using disposable, plastic/paper barriers only as truly needed; reusable cups instead of paper cups, cloth operatory, and sterilization methods instead of disposables, reusable metal instead of plastic suction tips, tooth-colored instead of silver amalgam restorations thus reduction of mercury and other heavy metals into water system; energy-saving measures such as energy-saving light bulbs and motion sensors and light-emitting diode operatory lighting and use fluorescent instead of halogen lighting, where practical and finally use of liquid-crystal display instead of cathode ray tube computer screens. Use of hand sanitizer instead of handwashing when appropriate and turning off the water while lathering when handwashing is required helps conserve water. US dental offices dispose 48 million lead foils each year and the chemical fixers and lead foils from X-ray processes have to go somewhere, which often means public sewer systems; so, switching to digital imaging helps a great deal.

So, as one can see, there is tremendous scope to turning a "green" dentist and thus conserving our planet. As Paul Hawken beautifully put it "The ultimate purpose of business is not, or should not be, simply to make money. The promise of business is to increase the general well-being of humankind through service, a creative invention and ethical philosophy."

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