

THE NEXT BIG THING IN DENTISTRY

I am asked all of the time what the next big thing is going to be in dentistry. What new technology or technology is going to change dental practice? We certainly have made huge advancements in a number of areas, such as restorative therapy, implants, and esthetics.

I believe the direction of the next great thing in dentistry is actually going to take place in the oral-systemic connection. Most dentists are familiar with this connection as being how oral health affects systemic health. I'm going to look at the oral-systemic connection from a completely different angle – the oral-systemic esthetic perspective.

We all can do a magnificent job of making teeth look great and giving people a healthy and beautiful smile. Esthetic dentistry has been an absolute boom over the last 30 years when it comes to such innovative techniques as teeth whitening and minimally invasive veneers like Lumineers. Now that the teeth look good, what about the peri-oral areas around the mouth? If the teeth look good but we ignore the rest of the face, then we have really limited what we have done in esthetic dentistry.

It is time to seriously give serious consideration to extending the oral-systemic connection to the esthetic realms of the face which dentists are more familiar than any other healthcare practitioner. Dermal fillers, such as hyaluronic acid (Juvederm, Restylane) and calcium hydroxylapatite fillers (Radiesse), are commonly used to add volume to the face in the nasolabial folds, oral commissures, and marionette lines. As we age, collagen is lost in these facial areas and these lines start to deepen. These dermal fillers are injected right under the skin into to plump up these areas so that these lines are much less noticeable. The face looks more youthful and esthetic and is the perfect complement to any esthetic dentistry.

I have been trained and have had experience with these dermal fillers for a while and this is a very easy procedure to accomplish. We as dentists give injections all the time – this is just learning how to give another kind of injection that is outside the mouth but is in the same area of the face that we inject all the time. We also have a distinct advantage over dermatologists, plastic surgeons, medical estheticians, and nurses who commonly provide these procedures in that we can deliver profound anesthesia in these areas before accomplishing these filler procedures. I will never forget that during

my training, my patients were completely comfortable during dermal filler and lip augmentation therapy because of my ability to deliver proper anesthesia to these areas. The patients treated by other health practitioners were quite uncomfortable and indeed this is one of the biggest patient complaints about dermal fillers.

Many state boards are allowing general dentists to provide botulinum toxin and dermal fillers to patients. Is there a market for these services? In 2007, close to 3 billion dollars were spent on botulinum toxin and dermal filler therapy in the US. Think about this – that was money spent on non-surgical elective esthetic procedures that could have been spent on esthetic dentistry but the patient made a choice. Interestingly, these procedures become more popular in an uncertain economy because patients want to do something to look better that is more affordable than surgical esthetic options.

Like anything else you do, this requires some training and the learning curve is incredibly short because you already know how to give comfortable injections. I often give training sessions in botulinum toxin and dermal fillers and dentists are amazed how easy these procedures are compared to everything else we do. Finding practice models is easy - start asking family and friends who will fight to have you practice on them. If you want further proof, ask women in your practice if they have had or would like dermal filler therapy. You will be overwhelmed at the positive response.

The next big thing in dentistry? It may come as we start expanding outside of the teeth and gums into the peri-oral tissues, which is within every dentist's skill set. All you need is knowledge and practice. Then, you will be able to deliver these new services to your patients and truly complement your esthetic dental practice.

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practice has maintained a 45% overhead since 1988. You can contact him at 440 892-1810 or email dryowza@mail.com . You can also see his lecture schedule at www.commonensedentistry.com where you can find information about his botulinum toxin and dermal filler training, building the best dental team ever, big case acceptance success! and sign up for his affordable monthly consulting programs, teleconferences, audio cd's and free monthly e-newsletter.