

# The magical gift of time

Makbule Ogretme discusses her simple strategy for effective, comfortable patient care.



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The ethos of 'slow dentistry' is one I advocate and, now more than ever, is important for us all to implement. We need to allow ourselves – and our patients – the benefit of time now we are back to practice. They need to get to know us and understand what we are saying and why. In return, we must actively listen to them to make the experience personal. If

I know my patients' hobbies, or, for child patients, their favourite cartoon characters, the movies they like to watch, their best friend's name, their pets and so on, I can engage with them easily. I am blessed with a good memory and have a habit of taking mental notes about all of my patients. Typing notes in patient files may become handy to remind ourselves of ☺



☉ those little details.

One cannot be a dental professional without good communication skills. This is even more important in paediatric dentistry. We must use a language that children can understand and with which they can identify. It is also paramount not to lie, but instead use different words whilst explaining what we are going to do. In paediatric dentistry, this is often called 'childrenese'. Some common words, for example, are:

- Water spray, shower or air gun = three-in-one
- Buzzy brush = handpiece
- Hoover, or elephant trunk (for younger children) = suction
- Tooth counter = probe
- Tooth shampoo = etch
- Raincoat = rubber dam
- Sleeping juice = injection

Parents can be both a positive and negative influence. If a parent is anxious about the dentist, they can reflect that on the child, which makes our job trickier and this is why behaviour management is important. Parents also need to

understand the advice we are giving and should be able to apply it at home on a daily basis. Comfortable dental treatment is ultimately the most important factor for any patient.

No matter how certain we might be that we delivered good local anaesthesia, if a patient says they are still feeling pain we should listen and stop. The majority of anxious patients have one story in common and it is that their dentist carried on with treatment when they expressed pain. I learnt to use the Wand years ago and that completely changed the way I practised. The Wand is wonderful in delivering the intraligamentary injection as well as the infiltration, which immediately provides profound and deep anaesthesia. Beforehand, I always apply topical gel for five minutes and try to explain to my patients what kind of pressure and sensation they will feel.

The Wand is a big step in the right direction when it comes to paediatric dental care. I cannot think why a dental practitioner would

prefer the traditional syringe to deliver local anaesthesia. It's easy to use, does not occupy much space and provides great patient comfort. It looks like a pen, so many patients don't even know I am injecting. Some children are more curious than others and want to see the needle. It's extra short – and you don't even insert the full length – so, that's reassuring for them. Many know what injection means and expect to see a big needle, but when they see a small box with a computerised voice there is no association with a needle. The system provides both visual and audible feedback to the dentist to find the correct location for the delivery. The handpiece can be held with a pencil grip which makes it easy to access small areas. Needless to say, the Wand is not limited to children's dentistry. I use it with my adult patients as well.

Some dentists believe delivery with the Wand takes a long time, but that is exactly how it should be – slow. You don't need to stress about how fast or slow you're giving LA, as the machine does that for you – and, for intraligamentary injections, the panel tells you if you are in PDL. Of course, you cannot rely on the machine 100 per cent and must complement it with behaviour management techniques. Therefore, distraction throughout the LA delivery is the key.

If you want to see the finish line, you cannot keep running on the same spot. Technology is evolving every day and we constantly see new materials, techniques and equipment. Mostly, they are designed to provide patients with a comfortable and enjoyable dental experience. I always keep myself up to date by reading articles and attending courses. Learning new skills adds to the value provided to our patients and gives them confidence. In a post-covid world, it is wise to assess and embrace revolutionary new ways to deliver dental care. Like many things, dentistry will change. We need to adapt to the new technology to provide safe treatment to our patients.