Lightening the load
Dr David Bloom and Dr Jay Padayachy of Senova Dental Studios discuss the benefits of high-tech equipment

1. Digital radiographs and portable x-ray heads such as the Nomad mean that all the convenience of instant radiographs along with the resultant reduction in radiation dosage are available.

Not only are patients impressed by this technology, the advantages for the practice include time savings and also cost savings from not having to process the radiographs manually. Storage is no longer an issue and radiographs cannot get lost or misplaced or mistimed. Many courses are also available to allow your team members to take the radiographs themselves. See Figs 1a and 1b.

2. Digital SLR camera. This is an essential piece of equipment on many fronts for diagnosis, patient communication and laboratory communication. A picture speaks a thousand words and never is this truer than with dental photography. Seeing a picture of their teeth on a 17-inch monitor aids co-diagnosis. This can also be extended to include intra-oral cameras as they also greatly aid patient communication and co-diagnosis.

Intra-oral cameras are very useful when preparing teeth, for example when removing an old amalgam filling to show any internal fracture lines that are present, so that this can be documented. See fig 2.

3. Air abrasion unit. There are many available and each have their pros and cons. However, as a treatment modality, this is considerably underutilised and has many advantages ranging from minimal preparation to better bond strengths for adhesive dentistry. While some of these advantages can be achieved through a lower-tech, intra-oral sandblaster, these will not actually cut tooth tissue which air abrasion does. It can do this very conservatively and often without the need for local anaesthetic. With the advent of hydro abrasion, the mess often associated with this technology is also greatly reduced. See fig 3.

4. Patient-entertainment systems. Some pieces of equipment can seem high-tech but can avoid the expensive price tag often associated with this type of equipment. One such example is patient DVD glasses. These can be connected to a portable DVD player to allow patients to watch a film or programme during their treatment.

These systems can be very technical and involved, but they can also be as simple as a portable CD player with headphones. These little touches make all the difference to the patient experience. See fig 4.

5. Dental Lasers have come down in price considerably over the last six years resulting in soft tissue diode lasers at affordable prices. They now cover a variety of procedures ranging from cosmetic procedures ranging from cosmetic...