Arthritis and your Teeth

Dental videos featured on YouTube

Dr Gordon from the US uses popular video sharing website to help patients conquer their fear of the dentist

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LEIPZIG: For some patients, a visit to the dentist is a terrifying prospect. It is something they try to avoid under all circumstances. Responsible for this reaction is a gland in the brain called the amygdala, researchers found. At times of perceived potential danger, this almond shaped gland begins to set off a series of reactions that prepare the body to fight or to flee, the ability to enact a potentially life-saving flight response. Statistics from international studies about the prevalence of dental fear in patients show that 5–15 per cent of the population worldwide are experiencing this extreme fear of the dentist, despite the fact that untreated cavities or chronically infected gums and teeth can seriously affect a person's overall medical status.

Nowadays, specialised dental fear clinics use both psychologists and dentists to help people learn to manage and decrease their fear of dental treatment. The goal of these clinics is to provide individuals with the fear management skills necessary to receive regular dental care with a minimum of fear or anxiety. US dentist Dr Jerry Gordon uses similar strategies. After completing his educational career at Rutgers University and the University of Medicine and Dentistry in New Jersey (UMDNJ) and a general practice residency at The Monmouth Medical Center in New York, he meanwhile runs his own private practice in Bensalem, a 60,000 people township in Pennsylvania.

While conventional anxiety treatment options are standard in his day-to-day practice, Dr Gordon has started to put informative video content on his Web site www.dentalcomfortzone.com in 2006 and on YouTube the following year. The extremely popular videos sharing Web site, acquired by Google for US$1.65 billion in 2006, allows millions of users to upload, view and share video clips worldwide. Dr Gordon’s range of videos, produced by Swamp Queen Productions, a local production company, includes topics like painless dentistry and treatment options are standard in his day-to-day practice. Dr Gordon has started to put informative video content on his Web site www.dentalcomfortzone.com in 2006 and on YouTube the following year. The extremely popular videos sharing Web site, acquired by Google for US$1.65 billion in 2006, allows millions of users to upload, view and share video clips worldwide. Dr Gordon’s range of videos, produced by Swamp Queen Productions, a local production company, includes topics like painless dentistry and other procedures like air abrasion or cosmetics. But most typical for some tips and liked my technique, so I guess that evens it out. The most gratifying feedback is by apprehensive people who are in need of a root canal and are helped by the video,” Gordon states.

After having seen the videos on YouTube, several dentists have also contacted him about other important causes he is working on, like the treatment of retired American Football Players. “Having videos on YouTube can considerably broaden the scope of people who know about your practice, and what you are doing in your community. It is my hope that people can overcome their fear of dentists and dentistry, if only in small part, watching some of my videos.”

Gordon plans to further extend his video marketing in the future. Excerpts of his testimo-

Dr Jerry Gordon

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Having arthritis makes caring for your teeth difficult, but common dental procedures may make matters worse. According to an article in the January/February issue of Arthritis Today, recent studies show an increased risk of developing one arthritis-related condition and suffering a serious complication of another.

Studies found that dental X-rays can trigger Sjogren’s syndrome. Sjogren’s syndrome is an inflammatory autoimmune disease that causes dryness, especially of the eyes and mouth. In addition, Sjogren’s syndrome can cause problems in other parts of the body including joints, the lungs, kidneys, liver, nerves, thyroid gland and skin. Studies show fewer cases of Sjogren’s syndrome in less developed countries where dental X-rays are uncommon and the disease is not present at all in the least developed countries. Researchers in the Oklahoma Research Foundation say it raises questions about a link between X-rays and Sjogren’s syndrome.

Studies have now shown that the use of bisphosphonates, such as Fosamax or Actonel, for osteoporosis, along with invasive dental work, such as a tooth extraction, may lead to an increased risk of an uncommon but serious complication of osteonecrosis of the jaw. Osteonecrosis is the break down and eventual collapse of bone resulting from the loss of blood supply to bone tissue. Symptoms may include pain, swelling or infection of the gums or jaw, gums that are not healing, loose teeth, numbness or a feeling of heaviness of the area around the bone. Researchers are not sure exactly how bisphosphonates contribute to osteonecrosis of the jaw.