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 combat 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, specialized 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 techniques. 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 video 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 dental fears, as well as clinical videos on root canal, extractions and other procedures like air abrasion or cosmetics. In his opinion, a good Web site can be the deciding factor in whether the patient ultimately calls the office. "It has been exciting for me to share what I do with people in my own area and around the world," he told Dental Tribune in an exclusive interview.

With the rise and popularity of reality television shows like Dr 90210, The Swan or Extreme Makeover, people are more open to seeing clinical content in a realistic way. "Not every fearful patient will benefit from watching my clinical videos, but some will. This technique is well known in behavioural psychology, and is called systematic desensitization or graduated exposure therapy," Dr Gordon explains. "When fearful or phobic people watch the video and see instruments and different dental procedures, they can become more familiar and less threatened by the dental environment."

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-