Closing the gap

Dr Edward Young shows how the Clearstep method has helped a young lady gain her confidence and a beautiful new smile

Our patient, a 25-year-old female, had no history of orthodontic treatment and she came to us with concerns with the appearance of her upper anterior teeth. In particular, she felt that both her UL2 and UR2 were moving backwards and U1L and UR1 were moving forwards.

At that particular point, she was beginning to be very self-conscious with the appearance of her teeth. Her interest was principally in Clearstep as they are invisible and unobtrusive; she works as a primary school teacher and felt this would be a perfect choice. Although her lower teeth are also crowded, she sought only to have upper arch teeth treatment.

Closer examination of her teeth revealed that both her U/R2 and U/L2 were instanding and that she was tending to favour a Class III edge-to-edge incisal relationship. Her upper arch was also somewhat narrow and her overbite decreased.

Taking impressions

Relevant intra-oral and extra-oral photos, x-rays and accurate impressions were sent to OPT for analysis. On receipt of the detailed report, it was explained to the patient that in order for the perfect result she would need to consider having lower arch treatment too.

However, in order to address her problems, we would first have to expand out her upper arch using the Clearstep Orthodontic Dentofacial Aligner (CODA system), thus making her upper arch wider and then finally use Clearstep positioners to align. The CODA is a removable lateral expansion device made with very light elgiloy wire and soft esther acrylic. It is highly discreet and has a minimal affect on speech. I find the appliance encourages more effective lateral movement of teeth than a box of positioners.

Treatment recommended

We advised the patient to wear two CODAs for 14 weeks in order to expand out her upper anterior teeth, particularly UR2 and UL2. Prior to fitting the CODA, Clearstep enclosed composite templates to allow placement of material on the palatal surfaces of her UR2 and UL2. This allows the acrylic portion of the CODA to be inserted snugly underneath them to encourage gentle, consistent, favourable forces. It was noted earlier that the patient had a decreased overbite and this could be made worse by a potential appliance propping open her bite.

In order to address this issue, posterior bite raisers were fitted in her UR7 and UL2. The CODA can be worn at all times and typically patients adjust to the appliance very well. The patient was advised to return after 14 weeks to monitor her progress and to take fresh impressions for the move onto Clearstep positioners.

Long-term retention

After nine months of clear positioners, the case came to an end, and again, three retainers were given to the patient to encourage long-term retention.

The above case uses a number of techniques and appliances, systematically implemented in order to encourage favourable tooth movement to full effect. Clearstep positioners alone would have taken a little longer.

Throughout treatment, the patient had been able to continue her busy working life looking after a classroom of children as well as live her active social life while her smile continued to improve with no obscurities or problems.

The patient is delighted with the results and the tooth movement is apparent from the occlusal views in the images.

about the author

Qualifying from Sheffield University in 2004, Dr Edward Young practices at Amblecote Dental Care where he has a special interest in cosmetic restorative dentistry and orthodontics.

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