Managing periodontal diseases

Peter Galgut discusses different adjuncts to periodontal treatment to help dental professionals achieve the best outcome for patients

Periodontal treatment is no longer based on good oral hygiene maintenance and professional root-surface debridement alone. Although periodontal diseases are primarily caused by bacteria in plaque biofilm, several cofactors are also necessarily. Cofactors include genetically inherited tendencies, social factors such as smoking, environmental factors such as stress, and the presence of other diseases such as diabetes. This understanding has led to important changes in how periodontal diseases are managed clinically.

A number of studies have shown that even thorough root surface debridement (i.e., scaling and rootplaning) is insufficient to eliminate subgingival plaque bacteria (1), even in the presence of good oral hygiene. Increasingly, sophisticated strategies for management of periodontal diseases are being developed.

Pharmacological Adjuncts to Periodontal Treatment

A whole range of new products are now available to manage periodontal diseases more effectively in clinical practice. The best known products are topically applied antimicrobials and anti-inflammatory adjunctive aids to mechanical cleansing.

Antimicrobial mouthwashes and topical slow release antimicrobials, and healing anti-inflammatory products are being increasingly used clinically to control periodontal diseases more effectively as potent adjuncts to meticulous mechanical root surface debridement and good oral hygiene maintenance. They are used to maximise the healing process after mechanical cleaning, and to manage those patients who respond poorly to debridement alone.

Being able to place topical antimicrobials and anti-inflammatory products into areas of infection such as periodontal pockets is a major advance in managing periodontal diseases.

New Products to Manage Periodontitis more Effectively

A new range of innovative anti-inflammatory products have recently become available. A topical gel (Trade name Gengigel) is based on hyaluronic acid (an natural ingredient of ground-substance in which tissue cells grow). This product has been shown to promote healing and reduce inflammation (2,3,4).

More recently a systemic anti-inflammatory product (Trade name Periostat) has become available. This product is taken systemically for up to three months at a time to dampen down the over-active inflammatory response to periodontal pathogens, and characteristically respond poorly to debridement alone (5,6).

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