Small things make big difference

Dental Tribune’s Laura Hatton discovers there’s more than meets the eye in the small world of ToothVille

Gummy Bear attacks? Scuba divers treating root canals? Decorators performing tooth whitening sessions? Sound like an ordinary day at the dentist? Invite the miniature world of ToothVille into your waiting room and your ordinary day will be just that - not forgetting meeting with the builders to discuss that cavity restoration. In hindsight, the incredible world of ToothVille should have been partnered alongside Colgate Oral Health Month, which runs this month; with the campaign fast becoming a regular date in the dentistry calendar, ideas on how to inform and educate both children and adults on maintaining good oral health always need to be revamped.

Two Passions

Being a keen photographer, London-based dentist Dr Ian Davis (pictured, bottom right) has combined his two passions of dentistry and photography to create ToothVille, a world of model mouth moulds where various dental treatments are carried out by miniature figures. Inspired firstly by the artwork of Slinkachu (www.slinkachu.com) and the thought of what it would be like if teeth were large, Ian has created a storm of creative inspiration for the dental world using the power of these little men. The ToothVille sculptures include decorators carefully whitening a set of teeth, scuba divers carrying out root canal treatments, emergency teams rescuing broken teeth and workmen guarding teeth from a sugar attack from three-scary looking Gummy Bears! With a serious need to turn teeth and dentistry into accessible and approachable subjects for the public, ToothVille could be the perfect answer.

Patients at Ian’s surgery are experiencing a waiting room quite unlike any other; children and adults alike are being drawn into the unique world of ToothVille, describing the experience as anything from ‘amazing’ and ‘funny’ to ‘quirky’. From laughing and giggling as they see the Gummy Bear attack, to cringing at the implant photographs, ToothVille ‘demythifies the treatment!’; teaching patients about cavity prevention and restoration in a way that no other product has yet achieved.

Small things

The main purpose of ToothVille is to visually show how ‘small things make a big difference’ - the small things being brushing and flossing, the big things being saving your teeth and with more than 80 per cent of dental practices taking part in this year’s Colgate Oral Health Month Campaign, the introduction of these miniature creations into practice waiting rooms could definitely help encourage the theme of the 2010 campaign - ‘Discover 5 Essentials for an Even Healthier Mouth’:

1) brush your teeth, 2) avoid sugary snacks, and 3) visit your dentist regularly.

Having placed pictures along corridors and throughout his waiting room, Ian has also produced a book, mainly aimed at the younger generation, although adults also can’t seem to put it down! The picture-book, aiming to inspire prevention in all areas of tooth decay, begins with the least invasive treatment of Cavity Preparation and Restoration and leads onto emergency dentistry, before embarking on photographic images of miniature model scuba divers recreating root canal treatments. Whilst tiny workmen defend another set of teeth from sugar attacks the book comes to an end with further photographs, carried out in pure ToothVille style, recreating the invasive treatment of an implant; the final destination that all teeth want to avoid!

Originally spurred on by his photographic hobby, Ian’s passion for combining dentistry and photography under one roof is certainly becoming that of a business, and with the British Dental Trade Association on 14-16th October, we will hopefully see a display of the iconic ToothVille series on public view. Future models of ToothVille will see regular sugar attacks (as these seemed to go down rather well with all ages!) and further creations will be modelled on orthodontic treatment and tooth loss. Like existing ToothVille models, future photographs of the moulds will visually demonstrate different treatments, casting a brighter light on orthodontic treatments and expressing how tooth loss can be avoided, and in serious cases, repaired. Even though Ian is continually focused on improving the models that he has already created, the “icing on the cake” would be to publish a children’s book, providing the younger generation with a chance to understand dental health in an entertaining and interesting way.

Making Patients Smile

With the miniature workmen as visual metaphorical representations of the ‘small things’ in dental care, the models are fast becoming a useful way of conveying the message of maintaining good oral health. In response to ToothVille, Ian said: “ToothVille is quirky and makes the patients smile in the waiting room”.

If this is the response that every dentist wants, then surely ToothVille is the way to get that perfect smile.

Photos of the ToothVille series are available for sale at www.toothville.co.uk.