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Hospital stays cause oral deterioration

A study titled *The impact of hospitalisation on oral health: a systematic review* has uncovered how oral health deteriorates during hospital stays.

The study suggests that oral health deteriorates during hospitalisation and is associated with an increased risk of hospital-acquired infections and reduced quality of life. The background of the study was to research how poor oral health of hospitalised patients is connected with an increased risk of hospital-acquired infections and reduced life quality.

The researchers reviewed the evidence on oral health changes during hospitalisation using five before and after studies recorded between 1998 and 2009 in the UK, USA, France and Netherlands; the data suggested deterioration in patients’ oral health following hospitalisation, and that there was an increase in dental plaque accumulation and gingival inflammation; the findings were worst amongst patients who required help with their breathing.

The research points to several potential reasons for the decline in oral health during hospitalisation including; the low priority given to oral care provision; the implementation of improper oral care regimes; and as a direct consequence of hospitalisation.

The study concluded that hospitalisation is associated with a deterioration in oral health, particularly in intubated patients.

Innovative probe unveiled

A leading dental implant provider has launched a pioneering new instrument that can significantly improve the consistency and quality of periodontal measurement.

Implantium has partnered with Professor lain Chapple, Head of Periodontology at the University of Birmingham, to design and deliver a new double-ended force measuring probe. Inconsistent probing pressure is a major source of measurement variation and discomfort for patients. However, the new UB-WHO-CF15 Probe creates a standardisation of probing pressure, which not only improves the consistency and quality of periodontal measurement, but also reduces patient discomfort.

The double-ended instrument combines a World Health Organisation (WHO) C-type end for screening periodontal disease, with a 15mm graduated end to enable detailed measures of probing pocket depth, recession, and attachment levels. Its design also enables effective washer-disinfection and autoclaving.

Jason Buglass, Director of Implantium, explained: “It is a real challenge to achieve consistent measurements with peri-probes. Professor Chapple’s new probe is a big step forward from previous instruments. By producing consistent measurement forces, more relevant comparisons can be made over time, in both the fields of research and standard monitoring. The design is ergonomic to reduce the risk of repetitive strain and the calibrated forces make it more comfortable for the patient.”

“...To work alongside someone as experienced and highly respected as Professor Chapple has been a real pleasure. We believe the final product will be of genuine interest to the industry, and at a cost of just £85 + VAT, is an extremely cost-effective solution too.”

Professor Thomas Dietrich, Head of Oral Surgery at the University of Birmingham, commented: “I generally think that this is a major advancement in peri-probing. It’s a simple, but great idea, and it will vastly improve measurement quality.”

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Holding the key to their success
David Bridges provides advice on how to make progress with difficult patients

Like many colleagues, I am an avid user of the internet. I spend a lot of time browsing a wide range of dental and associated sites researching the latest news, trends, politics and general ‘stuff’. I’m also a frequent visitor of dental and associated sites. Sometimes, a post appears that, at first sight, seems quite innocuous yet can make you stop, think and re-evaluate your approach and beliefs.

Just this week, I read a post from a colleague on a hygienist website that had just such an effect on me. This hygienist related a tale about the practice she was in. A patient of the practice that she had seen a number of times before that year, had returned for another three monthly visit. The patient had long-standing severe periodontal disease with a BPE of 4’s. She’d previously asked this patient to book longer appointments in order for her to carry out the proper treatment that his condition dictated, but to no avail. Repeatedly, he would only book twenty-minute routine visits.

Eventually, it appears the constant reinforcement of advice from our colleague might have finally achieved the desired effect.

Despite the fact he claimed to “use my purple tepe every day”, his plaque score was 100 per cent. Our colleague disclosed the patient, showed him in a mirror and recorded the score. She then went through her suggested treatment plan. She planned for an initial one-hour appointment first, followed by a subsequent forty-minute appointment at a later date. The slightly longer first appointment was to allow six point charting with plaque and bleeding indicies, disclosure, OHI, delivery of LA and root surface debridement of one half of the mouth. The second appointment was to treat the other half of the mouth. All well and good. Perfectly reasonable.

However, our patient balked at this on cost grounds and said he would only book and pay for two thirty-minute appointments “and that’s your lot!” Despite sharing the fact he had £1000 to spend on specialist treatment, he apparently didn’t want to spend it on the proper, initial non-surgical therapy.

Our colleague instructed reception to book the patient in at the end of a session for these twenty minute appointments so that, if necessary, she could run...
over and do the proper job. On the way home, she started thinking "...why should I?" but still showed signs of caring beyond the call of duty whilst asking us, her forum friends, how we would deal with this situation if faced with it ourselves. Essentially, she was asking about two options. Would we try our best to do the treatment in the time allotted by the patient or do what we could and leave the rest?

Nine colleagues including myself replied. We all offered similar advice which distilled down to:

1. Offer options
2. Explain pros and cons of each option
3. Document the reply and deliver the chosen treatment

In my reply, I said that I informed my patients that in this situation they have three options.

1. Do nothing - ie. we agree to part company
2. Carry on as we are but inform them that it is compromised treatment and the consequences of that
3. The ideal treatment plan with appropriate appointments, times and fees including the review appointments

All delivered in a non-judgmental way. Remaining friends and with all replies documented.

Hygienists are generally, as a group, a particularly caring lot and we often try to go the extra mile for our patients even, and perhaps especially, for those who seemingly won’t help themselves. We beat ourselves up and compound these feelings.

During that compromised appointment. The extra pressures of HTM01-05 and CQC and the near pandemic absence of adequate chairside support help compound these feelings.

Later in the week, whilst reflecting on the theme of the story, I came to the conclusion that it was essentially one of ownership.

Firstly, as clinicians need to make sure that we do not assume ownership of our patients’ problems. This is exactly what was happening in the story above. We need to feel confident in setting out our stalls and maintaining our principles in order to help give ownership of the problem back to the patient. It is only when a patient finally accepts that they alone hold the key to the success or failure of the treatment of their problems that we can begin to make progress with these more difficult people.

Secondly, practices need to take ownership of the fact that they are responsible for providing their clinicians with the best possible environment and managerial support in order for them to perform at their peak. The ability of practices to provide great equipment together with good managerial, clinical and full-time chairside support can make a massive contribution in assisting their staff feel more confident in dealing with these more difficult patients.

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly due to the sometimes insular nature of the dental hygienist’s job, is the realisation that we too can also take ownership. Ownership of the situation we find ourselves in. We can help ourselves deal with it by reaching out to fellow professionals for help, advice and support beyond our immediate vicinity, making use of the rich communication, education and research resources that the Internet has to offer.

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About the author

David Bridge R.D.H.
David has over 25 years experience as a dental hygienist in general practice. Over the last few years, in addition to periodontal disease, he has become interested in Minimal Invasive Dentistry (MID), particularly for the treatment of periodontal disease. He is also a co-founder of the software company Mid–Tech, which has developed software to aid the competition of patients that is compliant with dental hygiene, and in particular with the Comprehensive Periodontal Management At Risk Assessment (CAMBRA). Together with friend and colleague, Tim Joss B.D.H. he has set up an information website www.dentallifestyle.co.uk – which provides information and resources regarding CAMBRA. David and Tim also write online and in print on hygiene-related subjects and present across the UK on course prevention. They have even placed in all senses! with videos! See Dentallifestyle.co.uk on Youtube!
In March of this year, *Science Daily* published a story warning of the possibility of increased pathogen accumulation on orthodontic appliances. The story soon went national and the popular media were quick to warn readers about the dangers faced by the nation’s brace-wearing youth.

In fact, what the media were keen to play up as the latest ‘health hazard’ stemmed from a significant piece of research from the Eastman Institute, which highlights the importance of instilling a rigorous oral health care routine in orthodontic patients. Dr Jonathan Pratten and colleagues conducted research designed to ascertain the types and growth of microbes on removable retainers. The study confirmed the presence of potentially pathogenic microbes on over 50 per cent of the retainers studied, using a control group of patients without orthodontic appliances.

The theory behind the research was that the constant removal from, and replacement in, the mouth makes retainers susceptible to transmission of microbes. The study revealed that Staphylococcus was present on 50 per cent of retainers and Candida on 66.7 per cent. Both microbes were also found on the tongue and interior cheeks of those subjects. Although the risk to healthy individuals from these microbes is minimal, those patients with compromised immune systems could find themselves in danger of severe infection. The implications for children with underlying conditions such as Cystic Fibrosis, in whom Staphylococcus can cause debilitating and often life-threatening chest infections, are therefore serious, and this study provides further evidence for the importance of better cleaning of removable appliances and the effective removal of biofilm in orthodontic patients.

Microbes

This study is in addition to the research already done into the pathogenic implications of orthodontic use, notably a Turkish study from 2006, which was developed to investigate instances of caries in orthodontic patients. The study concluded that "Orthodontic treatment with fixed appliances does not increase the risk of levels of peri-odontal pathogens."

Other studies have highlighted the importance of good oral hygiene in patients with orthodontic appliances.

Deborah Lyle discusses whether orthodontics pose an increased threat of infection?
of patient education when dealing with younger patients. For teenagers, who may resent the initial aesthetic implications of wearing braces, it can often be a case of helping them to understand the long-term effects of wearing a retainer. Appealing to a teenager's ego can go a long way in this instance! With the vast amounts of media attention currently given to the prevalence of hospital-acquired infection, it can also be useful to use this as an illustrative parallel when explaining the importance of oral hygiene to teenagers.

De Pratten commented: "With the growing awareness the public has of hospital-acquired infections it is important to be aware of other potential 'hidden reservoirs' of harmful bacteria which could be introduced to environments where we know they can cause problems." Make it fun

With younger children however, the answer to inducing effective oral health care is to make it as fun as possible. As well as emphasising the importance of brushing morning, night and after every meal, it is vital that patients understand the efficacy of interdental cleaning. Many younger patients, as well as those with manual dexterity problems, can find flossing difficult however; so different methods may need to be employed.

Discipline

The problem that many dentists face is that orthodontic patients are primarily children and teenagers, with an estimated 66 per cent of twelve year olds requiring some form of orthodontic intervention. Compliance in adolescents is notoriously low because of a lack of discipline and self-awareness. It is therefore vital that practitioners consider every method of patient education when dealing with younger patients’
Moving your practice to prevention based dentistry as best practice – Part 1
Mhari Coxon discusses how to increase profit and client loyalty

Warning – this is not an evidence based clinical abstract. This is an article based on more than 15 years of experience in practice growing and developing, providing a preventative regime that empowers both your team and the client in a profitable manner. Those who have the perfect preventative based practice can thankfully stop reading now (that doesn’t include me you know, there is always room to improve).

Changing attitudes in dentistry
Dentistry has been a “see the problem - name the problem - fix the problem” profession for a very long time. We were conditioned that way while in our safe institutions and find it hard to move to a preventative approach to our health care when we transition to general practice and the time constraints and attitudes that come with it.

With growing evidence showing common sense links with our systemic health (if you had an inflamed, suppurating, bacteria covered area on your arm the size of an egg you would expect to feel ill so why would it not be the same for the same size lesion in the mouth?) and our oral health, we as a profession, need to improve our prevention led practice. This is clearly best practice.

“But we do it already” I hear us all cry. “You are reinventing the wheel Mhari!” If this was the case then the incidence of periodontal disease and caries in the population would be decreasing, as would the incidence of litigation against dental professionals in relation to periodontal issues and undiagnosed caries. It is not easy to look at what we are not doing and seek to improve but it is the only way we, as clinicians and as practices can develop and progress.

Building on the right foundations – The initial consultation
The first time your patient spends time in your practice will affect how they feel about treatment and how happy they will be at the end of treatment. How much information you glean from them can determine the level of success with each client. In my opinion, supported by its success in our practice, a short interview in a non dental environment can be very useful before the patient even sets eyes on the dentist. Our receptionist, oral health advisor, hygiene
ist and nurse can all carry out this short interview and are trained to listen and repeat to show that the patients’ wants, needs and concerns are being understood and will be presented to the dentist. Our patient’s feedback to us is that they feel happier knowing that they have someone who knows how they feel to support them.

How many times have you been to see a consultant or specialist and forgotten all the things you wanted to ask. “White coat syndrome” can happen to the best of us so why should our patients be immune? Using staff to provide a supportive and informative role can make the patient happier and your day as a dentist more rewarding. Not to mention the happy staff you will have working for you.

Examples of questionnaire questions:

1. When was that last time you had any dental treatment?
2. What was your main reason for your visit today?
3. Do you feel you have good dental health?
4. Do your gums bleed?
5. Are you sensitive to hot/cold/sweet?
6. Do you have any worries about your mouth or treatment?

Big up your team

It is difficult to appreciate the role of preventative treatment as a patient and it is vital that you convey that importance and the skills of your team if you want to have a success with that client’s behavioural change and treatment acceptance. Do you think saying “you have some gum problems and the hygienist will see you for a scale and polish” conveys a preventative message? Does that show that the patient has to make a commitment to their treatment by supporting with their home routine? Or does it make it sound as though the patient has a “problem” that you have “named” that the hygienist will “fix.” and so the cycle continues. Our principle talks about the gums and bone as the foundation to any dental work and without solid foundations he can’t work. He also explains how the biggest health benefit we can give patients is their oral health assessment and advice programme which always follows an examination and is precursor to any further treatment.

If you as “The Dentist” are telling them they need this then they will feel it has some value and are more likely to be open to advice from your team.

Communication about prevention

So, how do we change our patients’ thinking...
patient's behaviour? By changing our own behaviour of course. If what we were saying RIGHT now in practice worked, then almost all our patients would be regular maintenance patients with a good level of understanding of their health and stability in their oral health for the majority. If this is not the case then what have you got to lose by trying something new? Communication at that initial examination can make all the difference. It doesn’t need to be a long session, you just have to fine-tune how you talk and listen to patients. Some good basic rules are:

- If you ask a question, RE-ALLY listen to the answer...and don’t interrupt!! (harder than it sounds, I know)
- Ask about the patient’s knowledge about the topic you wish to discuss. This can open up the discussion in a non-confrontational manner
- Be positive...but realistic about their treatment needs
- Ask the patient if what you have said makes sense to them. Are you sure they understand the message you are trying to convey?
- Praise the talents of your team. “Sell” their care and watch as your treatment acceptance increases with little effort

A picture speaks 1000 words

Every working environment is different and has restrictions, but preventative dental care is very cost effective and time friendly so we do not have an excuse as a profession. For those with good budget to change the practice dynamics, you will save time and increase compliance with the addition of a microscope in practice. This should be linked to a live screen so the patient can see what you see. Taking a sample of your patient’s plaque and showing them what is growing there increases with little effort...effective digital camera can be as effective as an intra oral camera.

Be positive
We all respond better to positive suggestion as a rule and so how we discuss this with the patients can affect their attitude towards their health and your team’s part in it. I do not like to be lectured or scolded by anyone - an automatic wall comes up; so why would I use this method with my patients? Yes there are “problems” in their mouths. Yes you can “name” those problems. But you and your team cannot “fix” their problems. You can help the patient to find solutions and attain and maintain health. This is ultimately more beneficial than fixing the problem than trying to modify the behaviour. That is like feeding the donkey the carrot and then asking it to carry the load.

So to summarise:
- Use your team to glean information and discuss patients needs, fears and expectations
- Question the patient gently to develop conversation about their health
- Emphasise the importance of prevention in dental health and the benefits of this
- Show your patients what is happening
- “Sell” your team and their part in preventative care in the practice

Obviously, if the patient is immediate pain or risk then this should be dealt with. Otherwise resist carrying out treatment until the preventative routine has been introduced.

Part 2 will look at the information and direction your team need from that first appointment to support your treatment of the patient. For any questions please email me at mhari.coxon@cpdfordcp.co.uk

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About the author

Mhari Coxon is a dental hygienist practicing in Central London. She is chairman of the London British Society of Dental Hygiene and Therapy (LBSDHT), regional group and is on the publications committee of its journal, Dental Health. She is also clinical director of CPD- for DCP, which provides CPD courses for all DCPs. To contact her, email mhari.coxon@cpdfordcp.co.uk
Perio Tribune

“Tell me I’ll forget, show me, I may remember, but involve me and I’ll understand”

Liz Chapple explains how a risk based approach to periodontal management is the foundation for preventive treatment planning, patient empowerment and motivation, and medico legal protection.

Periodontitis is the most prevalent chronic inflammatory disease of humans¹ and a major cause of adult tooth loss, impacting negatively upon oral health, function, speech, nutrition and quality of life². However, we are only now beginning to comprehend the full impact of periodontitis upon general health. Periodontitis is significantly associated with systemic inflammation, with all cause mortality³, and with an increased relative risk for several other chronic inflammatory conditions, including cardiovascular disease⁴, rheumatoid arthritis⁵ and type 2 diabetes⁶. Successful periodontal intervention improves tooth retention⁷, improves diabetes control, and reduces the systemic inflammatory burden. Periodontitis, and its prevention, matters.

Changing the focus: Wellness not repair
The “repair model”, identifying current disease and fixing it when it breaks has pervaded dental training and practice since the beginning of the last century. This surgical mentality dates back to the days when periodontitis was considered ubiquitous and simply a bacterial infection consequent upon plaque accumulation. The solution was thought to be to eliminate plaque, hence the perception of perio as a plaque and calculus removal function. We now know that periodontitis requires a susceptible host and that we all vary in our susceptibility from the 10 per cent who are immune to the 10 per cent who are highly susceptible. We know that host factors are the major determinants of disease, outweighing plaque by a ratio of 80:20 in relative importance. The new medical approach, “wellness” aims to identify those patients most at risk of developing disease in the future and to engage them in individualised preventative care programs. Its validity is supported by the work of researchers such as Axelsson⁸ who demonstrated unequivocally that common dental dis...
eases like caries and periodontitis are preventable provided a risk-based approach to prevention is adopted at a patient level.

There are moves afoot... In 2000, the American Academy of Periodontology stated that a periodontal risk assessment should be an integral part of all dental and periodontal examinations. In 2010 the NHS incorporated the concept that risk should underpin patient care into the proposed new dental contract and made it the driver in the pilots for recall periods and care pathways. But predicting periodontal risk is not straightforward: how do we assess it?

We know the risk factors

Susceptibility and risk for disease vary greatly from one individual to another, and major factors that place individuals at risk have been identified. Factors known to influence the onset, clinical presentation, and rate of periodontal disease progression include smoking, poorly controlled diabetes, poor oral hygiene, extent and severity of existing alveolar bone loss, positive family history, proportion of probing pocket depths > 5 mm, age, gender, and gingival bleeding. The number of missing teeth is also a valuable predictive variable, while certain aetiological microorganisms may also be indicators of risk.20

Where we assess risk factors, our assessment is subjective: Although most clinicians collect the information required for risk assessment, tools for quantification of risk previously have not been available. Consequently, as currently performed, risk assessment consists of identifying the risk factors an individual patient may manifest during the history and examination taking process, and then making a subjective, qualitative judgment as to the magnitude and role these factors may be playing in the disease process. The evidence shows, however, that these subjective evaluations of pocket depth measurements, bleeding and plaque scores can be hard for patients to remember and understand. Success depends on the clinician’s ability to demystify periodontal risk and disease.

Patient motivation: knowledge is power

Patients are becoming increasingly interested and involved in their own care and want more and better information about their oral health status.20 Patient motivation can be increased with evidence-based and personalised information on objective, reproducible disease scores, explanatory text and sensitive to minor changes. Repeat assessments may be performed at any point in the treatment or recall cycle, and a graphical display of changes in risk and disease scores is automatically provided enabling you and your patient to track treatment effectiveness and outcomes.

PreViser Risk Prediction

PreViser is unique in that it is a clinically validated oral risk prediction and disease scoring technology, performed online within the dental practice and designed to provide immediate patient feedback. It adds just 3-4 minutes to a routine examination.

Routine data collected from each patient is entered into the software whilst the patient is in the chair, and transmitted securely over the internet to the USA. Here a mainframe server utilises a scientifically validated algorithm to return, within seconds, a risk score (scale 1-5) and a disease score (scale 1-100). This, together with treatment plan guidance based on the patient’s presentation, is provided in personalised reports for the patient and clinician.

The clinician report includes inputted data for future reference and storage on the patient’s clinical record. The patient report contains a visual display of the patient’s risk and disease scores, explanatory text about periodontitis and the patient’s role in its management.

Both risk and disease scores are objective, reproducible and sensitive to minor changes. Repeat assessments may be hard for patients to remember and understand. Success depends on the clinician’s ability to demystify periodontal risk and disease.

References

Tandex: An ‘Open Door’ approach to business for 80 years

Janni Theilvig has worked for Danish company Tandex for 15 years, and has been its Managing Director for three. With extensive experience in every single part of the company, Janni is the person to talk to if you want to know about Tandex, and she is eager to explain the company ethos:

“I like to think of Tandex, and of myself, as having an ‘open door’ policy. I encourage staff and members of the public to come to me with any ideas, praise or criticisms they feel will help improve our products. In fact we base a great deal of our research on the customer feedback we receive from dental professionals and other product users.”

It’s obviously a system that works, as this year sees Tandex celebrate its 80th anniversary, as well as receive continued acclaim both in Denmark and the U.K.

Janni’s connection with Tandex was first established in 1994 when her father Ole and his partner Henrik Andersen bought the already well-established company. Janni herself first joined Tandex in 1996, initially on a three-month contract, and worked her way up through administration to the role of Managing Director. She has, over the years, done a little bit of everything for the company, from answering phones and collecting customer feedback, to working in the factory and packing deliveries.

It is this experience that makes Janni the boss she is today, and she seems to have a remarkable empathy for her staff and her clients.

By concentrating on what customers want, Tandex is able to produce reliable and effective products. The latest product from Tandex, the FLEXI Max interdental brush, is no exception. Already well known for its superb range of interdental brushes, including the popular Tandex FLEXI, the company has included the FLEXI Max in its range to meet the needs of people who find interdental cleaning difficult, including those with manual dexterity problems. The FLEXI Max’s long handle and angled head make it easy to use for people of all ages; as well as those with orthodontic appliances in place, it retains the same soft touch grip and colour coding as the Tandex FLEXI. It is an ideal addition to the range, which also includes toothbrushes, toothpicks, den-

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STERITRAK - tracks your instruments through the sterilisation process

Track your trays of instruments through the cleaning and sterilisation process so that you can prove compliance with CQC outcome 8.

Steritrak is another solution from Carestream which helps you achieve full CQC compliance and gets rid of the need for multiple paper log books and the pressures of ensuring information is updated regularly and kept secure.

Carestream Dental
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made from a bone or wooden handle, fitted with bristles taken from the neck and shoulders of pigs. Little had altered since William Addis sold the first commercially marketed toothbrushes in the UK in 1885, but that was soon to change, thanks to American chemical company DuPont. In 1939, DuPont introduced nylon to the world, and toothbrush manufacturers were quick to utilise the material for their bristles, thus revolutionising the industry. With such advances in dental technology, companies like Tandex thrived, and with the advent of specialised interdental brushes in the 1980s, the company found its niche. Interdental brushes may have been initially designed for the wide interproximal gaps found in patients suffering from periodontitis, but once it was firmly established that such devices could be utilised in every patient's oral health care regime, Tandex were quick to develop products that could be used by any patient of any age.

Since Janni's appointment as MD, Tandex have continued to go from strength to strength, and now have an excellent customer base in the UK. To ensure that things are running smoothly at this end of the line, Tandex employs a special team of dental professionals to represent the company at dental shows, help collate that all-important customer feedback, and assist in the design process. Rachel Pointer, a dental hygienist, has been instrumental in developing new products for the Tandex range, and Janni holds her and her team in the highest regard.

“It's the work of professionals like Rachel that really helps Tandex to continue to grow. With first-hand experience of using these products in the surgery, she can advise us on what does and doesn't work for patients and this is an invaluable part of the development process.”

The emphasis placed on the abilities and welfare of its staff is definitely one of Tandex's biggest selling points. The overall impression one gets when speaking to Janni is that this is a company that cares about its customers, its products and its staff. Some of the Tandex employees have been with the company for over thirty years and their loyalty inspires Janni herself to keep striving for perfection and pitching in where needed, even if that means donning work gear to spend a day on the factory floor.

Tandex's dedication to quality and customer care is obvious, and it is this that drives the company:

“As a small company we are in an excellent position to listen to every piece of customer feedback and we use this feedback when designing new items. The most important things for me are that our products are of the highest quality and our employees look forward to coming to work in the morning. After all, if you don't enjoy your job, you can't do your best work!”

From the quality of its products, it is easy to see how Tandex has accumulated 80 years excellent service to the dental industry and, with the enthusiasm shown by Janni and her staff, it is easy to see how it will continue to thrive in the future.

For more information on any of Tandex's range of products for better oral health, please visit www.tandex.dk

References