Short-term gains...long-term problems?
The emergence of STO and its future implications in general practice

By Aws Alani, UK

The provision of orthodontics can be a life-changing experience for young patients whose "crooked" teeth can affect their confidence and self-esteem. Indeed, mature patients whose "crooked" teeth can affect their confidence and self-esteem.

The emergence of STO and its future implications in general practice...
The rapid development of STO has not escaped the venture (or some may say vulture) capitalists. In the same vein as DIT whitening and sports guards, one can now have one’s teeth straightened via online companies using products delivered by Her Majesty’s Royal Mail and so cut out the middleman (i.e. the dentist). To my knowledge, STO has yet to make it on to the price list of Samantha’s, a beauty salon in Peckham.

What may cause fear and worry is the provision of treatment set against a backdrop of a focus on increasing revenue and patient conversion may detract from the real reasons we are providing the treatment. The risk and benefit of treatment must remain balanced or be rebalanced in favour of the patient.

The best things in life are rarely quick, easy and without reflection. While learning or training, one gains stature from one’s mistakes and learns by way of osmosis from those of individuals one hopes to emulate. Becoming an expert in many a field requires time, effort and experience. Orthodontics is a complicated discipline that is difficult to deliver optimally and efficiently. Treatment planning should be performed in person not only to appreciate the challenges the patient presents with but also to develop a lasting patient rapport. Equally important, patients need to be diligent during treatment and forever more for purposes of retention. Is it possible that a one- or two-day course with a treatment plan lasting half a year or less can provide equally optimal results to a specialist orthodontist utilizing traditional means? In any case, placing a time limit on any treatment could be considered unethical. The movement of teeth into the correct position may be possible in the short term, but in the long term complications may arise owing to a variety of soft- and hard-tissue factors that cannot accommodate this new and supposedly “right” position. Indeed, orthodontics requires the appreciation of detail where symmetry and alignment are “king”, but long-term stability is likely “empress”. Lack of professionalism is a common complaint and where patients have paid handsomely for a result they may have been happy with at the time of the cheque clearing, over time tiny tooth shuffles can result in disproportionately and vehement dissatisfaction. Where teeth are moved indiscriminately, recession in the labial segment is a complication difficult to explain and remedy in the high lip line of a conscientious and ambitious corporate female patient. Indeed, more haste, less speed may result in a case being etched longer in the memory of the patient and the clinician for the wrong reasons.

In the now highly litigious arena of UK dentistry, the failure of orthodontic treatment against the backdrop of Montgomery v. Lanarkshire Health Board is likely to result in increased litigation. The movement of teeth into what the patient and the dentist feel is the correct position may be possible in the short term, but in the long term complications may arise owing to a variety of soft- and hard-tissue factors that cannot accommodate this new and supposedly “right” position. Indeed, orthodontics requires the appreciation of detail where symmetry and alignment are “king”, but long-term stability is likely “empress”. Lack of professionalism is a common complaint and where patients have paid handsomely for a result they may have been happy with at the time of the cheque clearing, over time tiny tooth shuffles can result in disproportionate and vehement dissatisfaction. Where teeth are moved indiscriminately, recession in the labial segment is a complication difficult to explain and remedy in the high lip line of a conscientious and ambitious corporate female patient. Indeed, more haste, less speed may result in a case being etched longer in the memory of the patient and the clinician for the wrong reasons.

While learning or training, one gains stature from one’s mistakes and learns by way of osmosis from those of individuals one hopes to emulate. Becoming an expert in many a field requires time, effort and experience. Orthodontics is a complicated discipline that is difficult to deliver optimally and efficiently. Treatment planning should be performed in person not only to appreciate the challenges the patient presents with but also to develop a lasting patient rapport. Equally important, patients need to be diligent during treatment and forever more for purposes of retention. Is it possible that a one- or two-day course with a treatment plan lasting half a year or less can provide equally optimal results to a specialist orthodontist utilizing traditional means? In any case, placing a time limit on any treatment could be considered unethical. The movement of teeth into the correct position may be possible in the short term, but in the long term complications may arise owing to a variety of soft- and hard-tissue factors that cannot accommodate this new and supposedly “right” position. Indeed, orthodontics requires the appreciation of detail where symmetry and alignment are “king”, but long-term stability is likely “empress”. Lack of professionalism is a common complaint and where patients have paid handsomely for a result they may have been happy with at the time of the cheque clearing, over time tiny tooth shuffles can result in disproportionate and vehement dissatisfaction. Where teeth are moved indiscriminately, recession in the labial segment is a complication difficult to explain and remedy in the high lip line of a conscientious and ambitious corporate female patient. Indeed, more haste, less speed may result in a case being etched longer in the memory of the patient and the clinician for the wrong reasons.

Clear steps to business building
A cornerstone of a successful business is the repeat customer who values the dentist and his or her service and returns with no qualms or misgivings about what the dentist feels should be provided. A successful business relies on patients returning in the long term owing to their positive experiences. Focusing on short-term gains without due consideration of quality or reliability of the treatment provided has potential repercussions for patients, the business of dentistry and perception of the profession.

Join the largest educational network in dentistry!

DT Study Club
www.DTStudyClub.com

- education everywhere and anytime
- live and interactive webinars
- more than 500 archived courses
- a focused discussion forum
- Free membership
- no travel costs
- no time away from the practice
- interaction with colleagues and experts across the globe
- a growing database of scientific articles and case reports
- ADA CERP-recognized credit administration

Register for FREE!