The critical missing element

Where orthodontics and orofacial myofunctional therapy meet

Part 1

By Joy L. Moeller, RDH, BS, COM
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Problems that can be addressed

• Does your patient complain about chronic headaches?
• Does your patient have an open mouth rest posture?
• Have your patient's teeth moved after orthodontic treatment?
• Does your patient exhibit an open bite?
• Does your patient complain of temporomandibular dysfunction (TMD) or neck pain?
• Is the patient's tongue always “in the way” when you are adjusting wires?
• Does your patient exhibit a scalloped tongue from pressing against the teeth?
• Have you noticed oral habits such as thumb or finger sucking, nail biting, lip licking, hair twirling or chewing?
• Does your patient lisp when saying the “s” sounds?
• Does your patient grind or clench his/her teeth?
• Does your patient have chronic stomachaches, burping, drooling, hiccups or acid reflex?
• Does your patient have a forward head posture?
• Does your patient have a short lingual frenum or a tight labial frenum?
• When you check for oral cancer on the sides of the tongue, have you found lesions from tongue thrusting caused by chronic irritation?

These are all signs and symptoms of an orofacial muscle functional imbalance that can be addressed by an orofacial myofunctional therapist (OMT).

History of orofacial myofunctional therapy

OMT is an area of specialization arising out of orthodontics. The field of OMT is unique because the therapist helps the patient make major life-enhancing changes, which affect the entire body.

Three biggest challenges women in dentistry face

By JoAnne Tanner, MBA

Dr. Shaina vividly remembers working summers as a child at her father's dental office. Her dad would stroll in the office each morning, look over the day's schedule and simply walk over to see his first patient. Not only did he love his chosen profession, but he did it with such ease and joy that Shaina knew she would follow in his footsteps.

Fast-forward through the years, and Shaina is now the proud owner of her own office. Is life as easy as dad had it? Not even close!

A combination of many factors that greatly differ from her father's situation results in challenges that paint a far different picture in her own office, and many of them have to do with the simple fact that she is a woman. Let's explore those issues:

• The spouse effect. While it's true not all male orthodontists have their spouses helping them in their office, it's a much higher percentage than the amount of spouses female orthodontists have helping them. In Shaina's father's case, her mother acted as office manager, allowing a safe distance between doctor and staff, leaving him free to focus entirely on dentistry as opposed to dealing with the business and staffing issues.