

# Comprehensive oral health care

The streetwise dentist must keep up to date not just with professional and postgraduate dental education issues but the latest developments in the consumer healthcare market.

Patients are becoming more knowledgeable about medical and dental issues. It is not unusual these days for patients to march into doctors' or dentists' surgeries armed with the latest specialist information about their healthcare needs.

Oral malodour is a condition that patients are increasingly aware of. They realise it can be treated, and value and trust advice from dental professionals. Patients need help when choosing safe and effective products to incorporate into their oral hygiene routine.

The plethora of oral rinses on the shelves can be daunting for consumers. Mouthwashes in a range of attractive, bright colours make a whole variety of promises – to fight gingivitis, prevent cavities, loosen plaque and freshen breath.

But how effective are these products? A few years ago, Consumer Reports, an American consumer group, carried out a cosmetic test of 15 mouthwashes and found that while a number covered up the odour being tested (garlic pizza) for 10 minutes, only a small number still worked after 1 hour. Commenting on this study, an article on the diagnosis and treatment of halitosis in the

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BAD BREATH IS A DEBILITATING CONDITION THAT PATIENTS ARE OFTEN EMBARRASSED TO ASK THEIR DENTIST ABOUT. IT IS UP TO THE DENTAL TEAM TO BE PROACTIVE IN ITS APPROACH TO PATIENTS WHO SUFFER, THEREFORE



**Fresh breath expert Dr Richard Miller believes mouthwashes and toothpastes that attack volatile sulphur compounds, such as Retardex, represent the greatest advance in the management of oral malodour**

*Journal of the American Dental Association*, pointed out that no product proved to be consistently better than any other. After 2 hours, they all had fairly little residual effect.

Dr Richard Miller, a fresh breath expert and practising dentist in America, warns that a potentially greater problem with mouthwashes is their alcohol content. In his book, *Beating Bad Breath. Your complete guide to preventing and eliminating halitosis*, he writes that alcohol, a common household disinfectant, has been used to kill germs on surfaces for years. While it is effective against the bacteria

that inhabit the mouth, it has a drying effect on the mouth tissues, and dryness of the mouth contributes to oral malodour. 'These products provide short-term relief while creating a long-term problem,' he writes.

Dr Miller goes on to say that by far the greatest advance in the management of oral malodour has been the formulation of mouthwashes and toothpastes that are effective against volatile sulphur compounds. These products contain chlorine dioxide which destroys the sulphur compounds at the molecular level rather than

covering them up with another odour. He stresses that chlorine dioxide has been used in water purification for over 50 years and is totally safe for use in the mouth.

Periproducts, which markets chlorine dioxide based Retardex oral rinse, oral spray and toothpaste, receives many letters from consumers which express relief that their dentists have introduced them to these products.

Many patients are unaware that the tongue is the second most common site of odour-causing bacteria. Tongue cleansers can help. A tongue cleanser, such as the Oolitt Elite, is gently swept with a moderate, scraping pressure from the back of the tongue to the tip. It is a valuable adjunct in the fight against oral malodour.

Concern about halitosis can be a major reason for seeking dental care – it has been estimated that most adults suffer occasionally from oral malodour and that up to one in four are affected at some stage in their life. Dentists and hygienists are often the first line of help for patients who are keen to rid themselves of this debilitating social problem.

Offering patients treatment for oral malodour is an excellent marketing opportunity. Patients are often very grateful when discreet and expert help and advice from their dentist and hygienist resolves their problems.

This brings both professional satisfaction and a boost to the productivity of the practice.

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