

A little more conversation

A little more action, please.

Nick Williams outlines a preventive ethos of a practice dedicated to talking to patients.



All about us!

Nick and Jonathan are members of the Product Research and Evaluation (PREP) Panel, established by Professor Trevor Burke at the University of Birmingham. It researches and evaluates new dental materials.

Nick says: 'The PREP panel helps keeps Lime Tree at the cutting edge of new technology. Being an internationally recognised practice-based research group, we get to evaluate new materials. Through our involvement our patients have benefited greatly.'

www.limetreedental.co.uk

The team at the Lime Tree Dental Practice, based in Portishead in Bristol, is dedicated to looking after their patients – and empowering them in the best way possible to keep their teeth for life. Since opening in 2003, partners Nick Williams and Jonathan Jones have strived to improve the oral health of their patients by delivering a high standard of dental treatment and increasing patient awareness of their own dental health; educating them on diet and oral hygiene techniques they can use at home.

As well as chairside instruction, the practice has samples of toothpaste on reception for patients to take away to try before they buy. Nick says: 'We offer a full range of oral hygiene products for them to buy in the practice. As professionals, it is important to seize the moment and, for patients, they can immediately implement the techniques they have been taught. We even include oral health-focused articles in our newsletter.'

Team spirit

A team approach to patient education is applied throughout the practice. The importance of everyone's role is reflected on the practice's welcome photo board, and also on its website. The dentists identify any areas that need improvement and bring them to the attention of the patients. Then the team works together on the oral hygiene education and the receptionists show patients appropriate oral health products for them.

What an atmosphere

The practice's commitment to ensuring happy and healthy patients even extends to creating comfortable surroundings. Both waiting rooms offer views over an attractive garden, featuring three beautiful English lime trees, hence the practice's name. Nick explains: 'Creating the right atmosphere is paramount to the success of our treatments. We also provide daily newspapers as well as keeping magazines up to date. A number of years ago, a pub I visited in Bristol was displaying art by a local artist. The pub's reward – in return for the free exhibition space – was for the artist to create a piece of art in their own style with the pub's name as the inspiration.'

'I really liked this idea so brought it to Lime Tree, as we had an expanse of blank walls in the waiting areas, hall, stairs and landing. Most recently, we have had an exhibition by a local artist whose calming seascape images have been well received.'

Breaking down barriers

That said, dental phobia, anxiety and nervousness are additional barriers to dental care; many patients will either ignore or tolerate pain rather than visit a dentist.

Nick says: 'For those patients who have had a bad experience elsewhere – or who have a dental phobia – we hope our approachable, relaxed manner will help toward successful treatment outcomes. However, for those who require extra help with their anxiety, we are pleased to offer a conscious sedation clinic.'

'The sedation is carried out by Helen Mannion-Jones, who qualified from Birmingham in 1995 and has worked as a senior house officer (SHO) at hospitals in both Shrewsbury and Wolverhampton. During her time as an SHO, she gained considerable experience in both major and minor oral surgery under sedation and general anaesthesia.'

He adds: 'Helen has since had extensive experience in general dental practice using conscious sedation for routine dental care as well as oral surgery procedures. Sedation allows us to successfully treat our more nervous patients and improve their dental health.'

Worth a try!

The team at Lime Tree Dental Practice has committed time to talking to – and educating – patients in important oral health techniques. These include advice on electric toothbrushes, interdental cleaning and the use of a good toothpaste. Nick says: 'The Oral-B Triumph series has been a crucial stock item for years here at Lime Tree. It is an excellent brush that most people respond

to very well. We had heard about the development of Oral-B's Pro-Expert toothpaste several years ago through our contact with periodontal consultants from Bristol and Birmingham. The Oral-B research, backed up by endorsements from those consultants, meant it was worth a try.'

He adds: 'When it launched in July 2011, I initially didn't like the taste. However, I had to admit my teeth felt very clean. After persevering, I got used to the taste and started to offer samples to patients. Some months later, some of these patients raved about the Pro-Expert and, in those who were using it regularly, anecdotally, we started to see a reduction in calculus and periodontal inflammation. So, we started to recommend it across the board for tartar control, sensitivity, perio patients and patients with a moderate to high caries risk. Certainly in those patients using it we continue to see less calculus, a general improvement in the appearance of periodontal tissues and reduced sensitivity.'

Patient ownership

At the end of the day, communication is everything and Nick strongly believes that spending time with patients, and explaining their dental health and oral hygiene techniques and discussing treatments puts the patient in control and gives them 'ownership' or the responsibility of their dental health outcomes.