



## **Promoting Comprehensive Dentistry**

*By Roger P. Levin, DDS*

One point I consistently emphasize in my seminars is that dentists have to do more with what they already have. Nearly all doctors perform a comprehensive exam on new patients, but many don't provide this essential service to their long-term patients. If you're not making an annual comprehensive dentistry exam part of every patient's treatment regimen, you're missing a big opportunity to deliver excellent care and generate additional production.

We teach our consulting clients to perform an annual comprehensive exam on all patients, looking at five key areas:

### **1. Periodontal**

Gum disease is the most undiagnosed condition in dentistry. Measuring pocket depths should be done annually for all patients. This simple exam helps educate patients about the nature of gum disease, how it progresses and what damage it can do. Increasing patient awareness is the first step to increasing treatment acceptance for gingivitis and periodontitis.

### **2. Tooth-by-Tooth**

This is the area where dentists excel. The identification and treatment of caries drives production in most practices. Dentists should evaluate the state of older restorations and share this information with patients. For example, many baby boomers have amalgams dating from the time they were teenagers or young adults, and these decades-old restorations will probably need to be replaced in the coming years. Letting patients know now about the condition of their restorative work will prepare them for future treatment recommendations.

### **3. Cosmetic**

Many dentists don't broach the subject of cosmetic dentistry unless patients bring it up first. This

is a mistake. As evidenced by the popularity of over-the-counter whitening, many people want to have a better, brighter smile. Some of these people are your patients. Tell them what options you have for smile enhancement. Use a shade guide to show them what kind of results they can achieve. If you haven't done this before, you'll be surprised at how many positive responses you receive from patients.

#### **4. Implant**

Every edentulous patient should be considered an implant candidate. However, many practices use arbitrary criteria to pre-select which patients would be most likely to accept treatment. For instance, "Mr. Jones probably can't afford implants because he drives an economy car." Instead of automatically ruling out Mr. Jones as a potential implant candidate, give him the opportunity to say "yes."

#### **5. Occlusal**

This shows patients how their teeth actually fit together. Even if the occlusion requires no intervention, patients will appreciate learning that information. This exam represents an excellent way to differentiate your practice and build value for your services.

#### **Conclusion**

The annual comprehensive exam is a necessity for both patients and practices. In an age when practices are finding it harder to attract new patients, do more with what you have by performing an annual comprehensive exam on every patient.