

# Wanted: Whiter, brighter teeth

Teeth whitening seems to be on everyone's wish list—and this trend is likely to continue through 2011, according to a quick poll of member dentists of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AACD).

AACD members performed an average of 77 whitening treatments last year, and 57 % said that they expect this number to increase. "We are doing more whitening than ever before in our practice," says Shannon Pace Brinker, certified dental assistant and clinical editor of *Contemporary Product Solutions*. Pace Brinker performed more than 400 whitening treatments in the past year, and attributes increased treatment acceptance to the ability to offer a high-quality whitening system with various options to treat her patients based on bleaching strength, time, finances and patient compliance at her practice at Greenbrier Dental Center in Chesapeake, Virginia.

Pace Brinker says that her practice has reduced its fees for whitening, which has not only brought in more patients seeking whitening—but also opened their eyes to other cosmetic dental treatments. "Our existing patients are saying 'yes' to other procedures after the whitening, such as bonding, replacing amalgam fillings and porcelain restorations to match the whitening they have achieved," she said.

While the number of patients seeking whitening treatments will likely increase this year, Pace Brinker expects that the fees for whitening will decrease owing to specials offered by dental practices through deal-a-day sites like *Groupon* and *LivingSocial*. The average price for a whitening treatment is about US\$150 for take-home whitening and US\$350 for in-office treatment, Pace Brinker says. Since her practice adjusted its fees for treatment, she sees up to 12 to 14 patients per day on Mondays and Tuesdays just for whitening.

"Our case acceptance has exceeded our expectations with these adjusted fees," Pace Brinker said.

AACD members said their practices generated about US\$19,100 on average from whitening last year. The majority of AACD members polled said that they provide in-office and take-home whitening treatments. In addition, 22% said that their patients have told them that they use over-the-counter or commercially available whitening treatments.

Regarding gender, it seems that women are more concerned with having a white smile. Roughly 65% of dental patients who sought whitening treatment last year were female, according to the poll.

### **Fountain of youth at the dentist?**

Brushing, flossing and regular care are still key ways for patients to have a younger looking mouth, but more dentists will be adding Botox to their offerings in 2011, another AACD survey has found. "Cosmetic dentists are now using Botox and dermal filler treatments to improve patient smiles and reduce wrinkles in addition to treating problems like temporomandibular joint disorders," said Dr Christopher Ramsey, accredited member of the AACD.

Cosmetic dentists say another major area of growth in 2011 will be dental implants, or replacement of missing or decayed teeth, owing to the increasing size of the ageing population. "Tooth decay is a growing concern for older patients who are using more medications, which lead to dry mouth," said Dr Ramsey. "More seniors are turning away from dentures and bridge work for a more comfortable and longer-lasting implant option." Other popular procedures noted include veneers (52%), replacement fillings (45%) and dental bonding (37%).

### **New technology makes dentist visits quicker and easier**

According to the survey, 63% of the cosmetic dentists expect their business to experience at least moderate growth in 2011. Dentists in the survey attribute this predicted growth mainly to technology. Today, more cosmetic dentists are using the Apple iPad and other technologies to make visits quicker and easier. New technologies have reduced patient office time by at least 50%, increasing patient safety, and making the whole dental process easier and more comfortable. In 2011, dentists predict that there will be increased use of:

**iPads and iPhones:** Cosmetic dentists cite a wide range of uses from charting, displaying X-rays and

managing dental records to improving diagnoses and educating their patients. Multiple new apps are also emerging, including an iPhone calculator that helps cosmetic dentists analyse and plan new smiles for patients. Dentists and patients are also using smartphone apps to connect with each other—set up and confirm appointments, learn about the office staff, request medication refills and more.

**Digital X-rays:** Using these, cosmetic dentists can obtain a clearer picture of problems, such as an abscess or decay, in a much shorter time than with the older version of X-rays.

**Computer-aided dentistry:** CAD/CAM is revolutionising tooth restorations, replacing goop-filled trays with 3-D scans that mean no mess and no second appointments. Milling machines then use this 3-D data to create perfect ceramic crowns.

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**cosmetic**  
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