

Tobacco cessation and N₂O/O₂ sedation

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Dentists have a new indication for nitrous oxide/oxygen sedation, which would address tobacco cessation and which could be a practice builder. Nitrous oxide/oxygen sedation, known as psychotropic analgesic nitrous (PAN) sedation is listed in the HPCSA tariff list for medical practitioners. These codes are for treating alcohol and other withdrawal states viz., codes 0203/0204.

Practitioners are aware that there are approved codes for inhalation sedation with nitrous oxide/oxygen or PAN sedation viz., codes 8141/8143. Although currently, medical aid funders do not allow a fee for dental practitioners assisting patients to desist from tobacco consumption, the Council of Medical Schemes has agreed in principle, that dentists can aid their patients in this manner. Since there is a medical tariff for using PAN to assist with acute nicotine withdrawal there is now a way for dentists to be financially compensated when assisting patients to quit tobacco consumption.

This can be done, by using the applicable medical practitioner's codes for the use of PAN for withdrawal states (i.e. 0203/0204) plus the modifier 007. The modifier (code 007), allows dental practitioners to use an appropriate fee listed in the National Health Reference Price List for medical practitio-

ners, when a procedure is performed that is not listed in the dental tariff schedule.

Although some medical aids may still refuse to cover the patient's costs, practitioners who use PAN sedation are able to charge a legitimate fee for assisting patients to abandon the use of tobacco. Practitioners are advised to make it clear that patients themselves are personally liable for such fees, in case their medical aid repudiates their claim. Tobacco consumption, apart from its systemic dangers, has definite deleterious effects on the oral structures. These effects range from periodontitis to oral cancer. Thus, dentists have a responsibility to assist the public to combat this ubiquitous vice.

Before embarking on this treatment modality further information as well as training on the subject of PAN and acute nicotine withdrawal is essential. Nitrous oxide is a remarkable agent. For years we believed it had one application in dentistry, it now has another indication i.e. to assist patients quit smoking.

Conflicts of Interest

Dr Gillman has been involved with PAN sedation for over 25 years. He is a medical advisor to Sedatek, a company that supplies N₂O/O₂ conscious sedation equipment. ~

Dentistry, crime and justice

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Forensic dentistry, deals with the proper handling and examination of dental evidence, evaluation and presentation of dental findings in the interest of justice.

High levels of crime have necessitated an increased involvement of dental surgeons in criminal cases where tooth marks, or tooth related structures have been implicated. Dentists are asked on a regular basis to submit dental records of patients believed to be victims or perpetrators of crime. Dentists are also approached by Police services to assist in the collection of bite mark evidence. A DVD outlining the procedure to be followed at a bite-mark related crime is available to any dentist should he or she be uncertain of the procedure to be followed. Natural and man made disasters are making both dentists and the lay public aware of the importance of dental identification. This was seen during the 9/11 terrorist attack, the Tsunami disaster, the Katrina floods and the many air disasters.

Forensic odontologists are involved in the identification of mutilated corpses, in South Africa and in other parts of Africa. In 2007 a team from the of Pretoria assisted the Cameroon government after the Air Kenya disaster, and the Mozambique government after the ammunition explosion outside Maputo. Local forensic odontologists are internationally recognised for their research contributions related to: bite marks analysis, age estimation of children, marking of dentures, analysis of the effects of heat on dental materials, DNA degradation and time of death estimation.

South Africa is actively involved in improving and standardising the levels of forensic dental education worldwide, and is proud of its institutions which offer a high standard of training at the University of Pretoria and University of the Western Cape. The current International Organization of Forensic Odonto-Stomatology executive is South African with Prof Herman Bernitz as In-

ternational President. Visit the IOFOS website at www.iofos.eu for more information on the Organization.

Dentists have a role to play in the fight against crime. They should be aware of the measures they should take in their practices which would assist law enforcement agencies and dental forensic experts. These include keeping accurate and current dental records of all their patients, keeping all radiographs safely stored, and all electronic information saved. When examining young patients, the dentist should always be on the lookout for the signs of child abuse and should bring appropriate cases to the attention of authorities. Malpractice claims against dentists are increasing, and it is the responsibility of all dentists to become familiar with all legal requirements pertaining to the practice of dentistry. ~