

VIEW FROM THE PRACTICE

ILLUMINATING YOUR PREMISES

Rahul Doshi explains how the right lighting in a practice can have a positive effect on both staff performance and patient emotions

In the current economic environment, dentists are giving much thought to the business aspects of their practices. For years we have been drawn to high-quality seminars on clinical dentistry to enhance our skills. However, one key aspect of our practice that we need to give more consideration to is correct lighting. Correct lighting affects all aspects of our practice - team performance, level of excellence in our dentistry and the emotions of our patients.

Good quality lighting is a crucial factor affecting our ability to perform our roles within the dental practice. Research has confirmed that it also has a profound effect on our mood, health and well-being. Lighting affects us in different ways and this ultimately affects acceptance of advice and the way our patients perceive our dentistry due to their emotional well-being.

Using the correct lighting can affect:

- the way we feel and the way our patients feel in a dental setting
- our vision in both clarity and colour.

Correct lighting embodies a combination of criteria. These include:

1. Lighting level. Research has shown that raising of the level of lighting increases the accuracy and speed with which objects can be detected. Age is an important criterion since lighting requirements increase with age; a 60-year-old requires an average of 15 times more light than a 10-year-old to perform the same task. The amount of light required increases with a decrease in size of the object

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viewed, such as our burs and the detail of our preparations.

2. Contrast. Well-balanced contrasts give a harmonious and comfortable visual scene. The luminance contrast ratio (ratio between the highest and lowest luminance) should not be larger than three and not smaller than one third.

3. Glare restriction. Glare can lead to reduced visual performance, discomfort, fatigue, eye strain and headaches. It is therefore important to limit glare to avoid errors and fatigue. It is easier to limit glare with use of fluorescent lamps due to their larger dimensions.

4. Spatial distribution. An important criterion of lighting quality is the way in which light is spatially distributed, since it is this that determines the pattern of illuminances created. Thus, within the practice, the general light sources need be spread evenly with directional lighting for local accents, such as when working within the mouth or to create point of interests and highlight specific features within the practice.

5. Colour. Proper colour rendering is of real importance to us as dentists, when teeth must be seen in their 'true' colour appearance. This will allow us to create the correct shade matches for our restorations.

LIGHTING IN THE WORKPLACE

Research has shown that improving lighting quality also improves team performance by increasing alertness and reducing eye strain and fatigue.

Lighting can accentuate functional and decorative qualities of the space and its proportions, but can also be used to set the emotional atmosphere: warm or cool, happy or solemn, pleasant or businesslike. Ambient lighting can be used to set the mood or ambience of calmness and tranquility, a tool that would be very useful to nervous patients.



LIGHTING AND DENTISTRY

Additional good quality lighting for the dentist needs to be considered to obtain the correct shade for teeth and restorations (Trueshade, Optident). Also, the fine detail tasks we perform on our patients with the use of magnification loupes with overhead lights and having fibre optics on the handpiece can increase our ability to produce high-quality work.

SUMMARY

So, in summary, we need to put some thought into the quality, quantity and type of general lighting for the treatment rooms, the decontamination room, the office and the patient seating area. Accent and ambient lighting can help create an atmosphere of the correct mood (such as that from the Living Ambience range from Philips). This in turn leads to quality practices providing quality dentistry.

Rahul will be speaking at Cosmetic Dentistry UK, a six-day hands-on aesthetic course, along with Phil Broughton and Andrew McLean.
Dates: North (Manchester): 30-31 March, 13-14 April, 20-21 July. South (London): 15-16 June, 13-14 July, 7-8 September.
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