



Intraoral Cameras

A much warmer reception for this picturesque technology

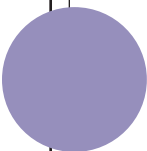
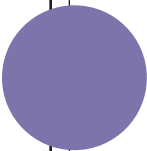
Tricia Osuna, RDH, BS, FAADH

The sayings “bigger is better” or “supersize,” as well as many others that want us to believe size matters, are prevalent in our society. However, supersizing in dentistry often leads to raised eyebrows and skepticism. For many years I’ve been aware of magnification, but I did not totally understand how it worked, what it would mean to me clinically, or how it would change how I practice. The use of intraoral (IO) cameras by dental hygienists is similar to our use of magnification, but now we have the opportunity for our patients to see the same “supersized” world we see! While some clinicians have embraced magnification, others have not quite integrated its use into regular dental hygiene therapy appointments.

The IO camera did not receive as warm a welcome from hygienists as it did from dentists because it was time consuming to use and bulky to move from operatory to operatory. I resisted it myself when I was first asked to implement it into my appointments in the late 1980s. The office I was practicing in was progressive about bringing in new technologies for the RDHs to use, but it was not as open to changing the length of patient care appointments so we could adequately use that technology. I was taught how to use the IO camera but I only used it selectively, usually when time allowed. I have realized over time

that using it would have made my time talking with the patients much easier, and they would have accepted many more of my suggested treatments.

Today’s IO cameras are much lighter weight, easier to use, and take less skill (with less of a learning curve) than the original ones. They range in size from a one ounce camera/handpiece which can be taken from operatory to operatory in your pocket and connected in each room, to mobile systems and built-in options. The integration of IO camera photos with office software allows us to store photos in patient files for use with insurance billing and record keeping of restorations and their replacements. This feature allows for instant recall of what has occurred and what has been suggested for other ar-



Company	Web Site
A-dec	www.a-dec.com
Air Techniques	www.airtechniques.com
Benco	www.benco.com
DEXIS	www.dexis.com
Gendex	www.gendex.com
Henry Schein	www.henryschein.com
Kodak Dental	www.kodakdental.com
Patterson	www.pattersondental.com
Schick Technologies	www.schicktech.com
Scican Inc	www.scican.com
Sirona	www.sirona.com
SOTA Precision Optics	www.sotaoptics.com
Suni Medical Imaging	www.suni.com

eas of the patient's dentition.

Camera handle options include the ergonomic shape of the handpiece, which allows for more coordination while taking the image. Today there are a variety of options to help capture images, from a foot rheostat to one-handed buttons on the slim handpiece. Ease of use increases the use of IO cameras in dental hygiene appointments, which leads to more successful patient education and treatment acceptance. As we know, the increased use of products ultimately provides improved technological advances, which benefits everyone.

The clarity of the lens is key to the result and the depth of field. Just as with magnification, if the resolution of a photo isn't clear, it's not useful to clinicians. With focal ranges of 1 mm and more, there are limitless opportunities for improved patient education. Video streaming capabilities also help with patient education and communication between team members. The ability to capture clear images and transfer them throughout the office creates a critical link between front office administration and the dental operatories. This link is another viable reason for hygienists to consider the use of an IO camera.

IO cameras offer cable lengths from 6 feet to 50 feet, which makes them user-friendly in any operatory design. Exceptionally quick data transfers without the use of a card allows for very clear pictures. The new IO cameras with USB connections do not require data cards, immediately turn on when lifted from the unit, and require less time. The

younger generation readily accepts the use of new technology, and actually expects their health-care providers to be on the cutting edge.

IO cameras have yet another benefit. Today we are held to a standard of care like never before — to provide excellent care for our patients according to the available technology. Oral cancer screenings where lesions are detected can now be photographed and shared with other dental/medical professionals. Having the ability to communicate with images instead of just the written word has come a long way, and the time for integration into the dental hygiene appointment is now.

One of the most important uses of the IO camera by dental hygienists is educating patients about periodontal disease. It has an impact on a patient to see areas of his or her mouth that are healthy, in contrast to diseased sites. Verbally describing redness, swelling, and bleeding can be somewhat abstract. The patient may conjure up a mental image of these conditions, but that pales in comparison to a 12 inch by 20 inch video image of red, swollen, bleeding gums. Educating patients about periodontal disease and treatment is much easier when they see it for themselves. Giving them a hard copy of the image is a powerful educational tool, especially if they can see a series of images that demonstrate the progression from disease to health, or health to disease. When you become adept with an IO camera, showing the patient probing depths is a good way to demonstrate periodontal disease. If an assistant is available, he or she can operate the camera while the hygienist probes.

For years I have held firm that RDHs should consider themselves co-owners of the practice where they are employed. IO cameras promote this idea. An IO camera helps patients accept and appreciate what has been done for them. When we recommend and provide treatment it is not only good for patients, but supports the office and fosters referrals. When patients can take a photo home with them, they operate as your marketing team in their personal network of potential clients for you. I want my patients to believe in me and in the practice, and to feel confident in what we are providing for them.

As the saying goes, "A picture is worth a thousand words."



About the Author

Tricia Osuna, RDH, BS, FAADH, is a clinician, educator, author, consultant, public speaker, and business owner. Her company, Professional Insights, Inc., provides market research, product evaluations, and consulting services. An active member of ADHA, she is the current president of the American Academy of Dental Hygiene, as well as past president of the California Dental Hygienists' Association. Tricia can be contacted at www.professionalinsightsinc.com.