

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK



LASER IS NOT BETTER THAN A CURETTE FOR PERIODONTAL THERAPY — NOT YET!

By **Ash Vasanthan, DDS, MS**
Associate Editor

My association with lasers started in my third year in dental school. It was at that time I submitted a paper on “Lasers in Dentistry,” which gave me the opportunity to present it at the national conference. It also became my very first publication. Later on, when I pursued my Masters in Dental Biomaterials, my thesis was on “Implant Surface Modification Using Lasers,” which complemented my clinical periodontics residency. I followed my desire to teach periodontics and found myself at the University of Missouri, Kansas City, which is known to be the hub of laser research in periodontics. I’m not sure if I chose lasers or lasers chose me. Our association continues to grow and this issue of *Nugget* just strengthens that.

We all can agree that in our professional careers we see many things come and go, but, only some things stay. I believe laser technology is one to stay and will continue to help and modify the dentistry we practice. I use lasers in my practice quite regularly for different surgical procedures from gingivectomy to implant uncovering and many other soft tissue procedures. I have come to enjoy using it for what it does. However, I have refrained from using it in non-surgical periodontal therapy. The simple reason is that I have not seen any scientific evidence in properly designed, well presented prospective, blinded and randomized multi-

center clinical trials. The mentioned type of trial is one that provides the strongest form of evidence, eliminating bias. Although lasers are easy to use and can definitely increase patient

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acceptance of treatment, the questions is, “Are lasers truly the factor that brings about our clinical success or is it our bias toward lasers that make us look at it that way?” In most cases the latter seems to be true and research has shown similar clinical gains without laser, which makes me feel even stronger about the way I practice my periodontics. One of my co-workers asked me, “So, should I quit using lasers for perio therapy?” and my answer to him was, “Definitely not. All I’m saying is be aware of the fact that it is a mere adjunct and is not the silver bullet.”

In this issue of the *Nugget* I have tried to compile a list of articles from authors of different backgrounds and, more importantly, from different geographic locations of the country. These authors are authorities in their field in their own unique ways and I’m thrilled that I was able to collaborate with them for this issue. It is my hope, that these articles

will give better clarity to our understanding of lasers and their applications. One must consider the fact that if the periodontal community, as a specialty, has not embraced lasers for non-surgical perio therapy, there definitely is a lack of evidence or a clear clinical direction to its use in our offices on an everyday basis. Although, at this point in time, the use of lasers in non-surgical perio therapy is more of an adjunct, the future definitely holds promise. I am hopeful that the LIGHT AMPLIFICATION in this issue of the *Nugget* will have STIMULATED your thoughts, focusing EMISSION of your energy in understanding this source of RADIATION called L-A-S-E-R. ■

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