



COUNSELING INSIGHTS

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Making the connection and engaging your patients

Hi, I'm Uche Odiatu.

I'm a practicing dentist, and the co-author of two books on health and wellness. This video explores some of the challenges that we all face when counseling patients.

I enjoy connecting with people and helping them increase the quality of their lives. It is most likely one of the key reasons why many of us got into the dental industry.

Let's talk about the recall visit, ie. exam and cleaning... the perfect opportunity to chat or dialogue with people and position you and your office as the "go to" place for the latest advances in oral health care.

We all know that some people want to just zone out, lay there and get their teeth cleaned without any interaction. Unless prompted, they may say less than a few sentences the entire appointment.

- Is this your idea of the perfect patient?
- Are they engaged?
- Do you feel you are accomplishing anything except cleaning their teeth?

In your heart though, all you eager dental professionals out there are biting at the bit to share the latest strategies for a healthy mouth... to give them the latest research based information you just learned at your last continuing education seminar.

We live for the patients that are interested and ask us, "What's new"?

You can hardly believe they have asked that question... so you start out slow as not to scare them with your enthusiasm.

So, you might ask them....

- You know that cold sensitivity that is still there from six months ago??
- We have some new information that could help you. (everyone likes to know they are in the hands of someone who stays on the cutting edge).
- We already identified that you did not have a cavity and the fillings in the area were fine.
- Do you realize it could be something you are eating or the way you brush? (questions are a very effective way to engage a patient - it opens up loops and draws them in to you).



*Dr Uche Odiatu is a practicing dentist in Toronto. He is also certified as a trainer with the National Strength and Conditioning Association and a professional member of the American College of Sports Medicine. Uche and wife Kary Odiatu (former physical education teacher, a professional athlete, and a Ms. Fitness Universe winner) authored the book, **Fit for the LOVE of It!***

If the patient was looking straight ahead, this is when they would turn and look right at you. "Hey I don't eat candy and sweet treats and just like you have always told me... I brush right after every meal..."

This is where you start right in...? Well, the latest research shows it isn't just junk food, and candies that can cause problems... it can be acidic food and drinks as well.

Even some that we consider to be healthy such as fruit juices, fruits, some herbal teas, sport or energy drinks, low calorie salad dressings... even heart healthy red wine.

And it does not end there... those acids... can temporarily soften your tooth surface and if you brush right away... you may even remove a layer of enamel... forever. If this continues, it can result in teeth losing their lustre and appearing less white. The teeth could also become more sensitive.

If this doesn't engage an already interested patient... nothing will...

I really understand that it must be confusing for them as they are giving it their best efforts to eat well and that many of them want whiter teeth; and to find out that the healthy habits they are doing may be contraindicated when done together... eating heart healthy fruits, teas, etc and then brushing. It is a paradox for your patients which leads to confusion. And a confused person rarely takes action.

Also, most people don't like to make dramatic changes to an already established routine.

Back to the example of erosion, some simple changes can have a very positive effect. For instance, patients at risk of erosion can consider rinsing their mouth out with water after they've eaten rather than brushing right away, and sipping on water throughout the day to ensure they keep their mouth moist, or trying to eat calcium rich foods with acidic ones. So great sources like: yogurt, milk and cheese. Patients can consider using toothpastes that are designed to help prevent the effects of acid erosion. These are all small steps that can be incorporated easily.

So... in summary... the counseling tips are:

- One - We must show our concern that for many patients this is **new** information and it can be a little confusing
- Two - **acknowledge** that we care about them and **commend** them on their desire to eat and drink healthy,
- And Three - at the same time, guide them to have an **overall positive end result** including:
 - A healthy mouth without dentin hypersensitivity
 - An attractive intact smile free from erosive defects
 - A supportive dental office with the latest information and tools for a great home care experience.

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GlaxoSmithKline Consumer Healthcare Canada is pleased to feature Dr. Uche Odiatu's articles on Dental-Professional.ca. The views, opinions, and data included here are that of the author. Please direct any questions to Dr. Odiatu at www.FitSpeakers.com.