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Painless injections ... why I do them!

By Jeffrey C. Hoos, DMD

As appeared in *Dental Economics*

Once again, I am sitting on an airplane, returning from presenting my latest course in Dallas. The course, "Implants for the General Dentist, Placement to Restoration," was sponsored by my good friend, Dr. Joe Steven of Kisco Dental. During one of the breaks, a doctor came up to me and asked if I would talk about my painless injection technique. I asked how he knew about it. His response was, "This is one of the most exciting things I have heard about. My friends are all talking about it since they saw you speak at Woody Oakes' Seminar."

With the group's permission, I loaded up the presentation. Things were going along fine, and then something very strange happened to me. You will have to read on to the end of this article to find out what that was.

My painless injection technique is all about the method I developed to give a truly painless injection anywhere in the mouth. Before anyone emails me to tell me it is impossible, what is more important is why I developed such a technique. I developed the technique because I was a dental phobic! I can tell you that it is a very deep-seated fear which I have been able to overcome.

My story about my dental phobia is not unlike anyone else's. At the age of five, my mom took me to a dentist who hurt me so much, I would go to the bathroom in my pants at the prospect of going again. My mom was a very smart woman. She would just bring a change of clothes for me when we went to the dentist. I then figured out that I needed to take the avoidance of the dentist to the next level. When I was taken to the dentist, I would throw up. It was OK to throw up in the car, because mom would clean that up. But throwing up in a dental office, that was another story! My mom was "ordered" to never bring me back to the office again.

I won that round of fighting, but a little farther down the road, dental disease came to visit again. My dad took charge of my dental visit this time, and, as with most men, there was no acting out. It just so happened that my dad worked in a meat-packing plant, and a young guy who worked there in the summer was a dental student. My dad became his first patient when he graduated.

We were at a synagogue at a father and son Sunday breakfast, when I developed a terrible toothache. My dad called his dentist and we went to meet him at his office. The sequence of events could have been predicted by any behavioral psychologist. First, I went to the bathroom in my pants. Well, that didn't phase my father, who said, "What are you crying about? Next time, you will think about this because you are just going to have to sit in it." So, I switched to Plan B. Armed with a stomach full of lox, bagel, scrambled eggs, and juice, I had plenty of ammunition. I proceeded to throw up all over the dentist's bathroom. The difference was that instead of the dentist making my father take me out of the office, he came into the bathroom and sat down on the floor next to a trembling little boy with vomit all over him.

It is amazing how someone responds to compassion. The dentist explained to me that he knew how I felt. It is a method many of us know -- feel, felt, and found. "Jeffrey," he said, "I understand how you feel being frightened. I have felt that way, too, but I found out there is a way to do this comfortably." It is because of Dr. Irving Paul from Bangor, Maine, that I decided to become a dentist. When I started dental school, I made a vow to myself to perform procedures as painlessly as possible and to try to deal with my patients with compassion. Later in my dental career, I decided to try to take Dr. Irving Paul's message of treating people as adults and being understanding to other dentists.



I made it a priority to learn a series of techniques that truly allowed for painless injections. So what happened to me during the lecture about these techniques? I became emotional. I have hundreds of hours of public speaking, and have received feedback from audience members that I am pretty good at it. I always resented it when a presenter used emotion to move an academic audience, in-stead of using information. I got myself together, and I'm not sure anyone in that audience even knew that I had broken one of my own rules.

Thank you, Dr. Irving Paul, for leading me to the wonderful profession of dentistry. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to teach dentists how to do painless injections and allowing me to model the world of compassion in caring for my patients. I should have told you much sooner.

Have a compassionate, productive month, and until next time, keep looking for that balance.

Jeffrey C. Hoos, DMD, FAGD, is president of the Giraffe Society: "Professionals willing to stick their necks out." His seminars focus on "Balancing: The Art, Science, & Business of Dentistry." Contact him by email at jchdmd@msn.com or visit his Web site at www.dentalexplorations.com.

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