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In praise of single visit root canal treatment

Endodontic specialist Julian Webber encourages dentists where possible to complete root canal treatment in one visit

An endodontic treatment which has been completed to a high standard following basic principles has a very high chance of a successful outcome in terms of healing and tooth survival whether undertaken over one visit or two.

Julian Webber, founder and principal of the Harley Street Centre for Endodontics, speaking on the topic of Endodontic Controversies said there is no good reason not to complete treatment in a single visit.

In a day course entitled “Webber on Endo” at the Royal College of Physicians Julian said that some clinicians still believe in the curative effect of a Calcium Hydroxide dressing, but this is not borne out by a thorough review of endodontic research. He asked his audience: “What is our obsession with the white stuff?”

The theory behind the use of Calcium Hydroxide, better known as slaked lime, is that endodontic pathogens are unable to survive in the alkaline environment it creates. But, according to the literature, said Julian, most of our canals are cleaner at the end of the first visit than they are at the start of the second visit, including cases medicated with Calcium Hydroxide.

Julian went on to say that if the endodontic procedure itself has been robust, the canal is completely dry and there is time to complete the treatment, then the dressing and the second visit are irrelevant.

What matters, he stressed, is:

- Location of all the canals

- A high standard of irrigation
- A well shaped canal to facilitate irrigant effectiveness and optimal 3D obturation of the root canal system
- Absence of fracture of the tooth structure through the floor of the pulp chamber.

One member of the audience commented that it was a confidence issue for dentists who believed they could get a better result from two visits. Julian encouraged dentists to provide single visit treatments where possible since, he argued, it was in the patients' best interests.

In addition to carrying out demonstrations on single teeth using the new reciprocating file systems and an operating microscope, Julian welcomed audience members to spend some time in his practice.

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Note to editors

Julian Webber was the first UK dentist to receive a Masters Degree in ENDODONTICS from a university in the USA. He received his BDS from Birmingham University in 1974 and his MS and Certificate in Endodontics from Northwestern University Dental School, Chicago, Illinois, USA in 1978. He has been a practicing Endodontist in Central London since 1978 and opened the HARLEY STREET CENTRE FOR ENDODONTICS in October 2002.

Julian lectures extensively in the UK and has travelled abroad on many occasions to lecture to major world Dental and Endodontic societies. Through his various workshops and hands on courses, he has helped to train many general dentists in the skills of modern endodontic technique. For further information of upcoming lectures, courses and hands on contact info@julianwebber.com

Julian Webber has been President of the British Endodontic Society, President of the American Dental Society of London. He is an executive committee member of the American Dental Society of Europe and an active member of the American Association of Endodontics currently serving on various committees. He is a Fellow of The International College of Dentists. Dr Webber is also Editor in Chief of Endodontic Practice Journal, a clinically orientated endodontic publication with a worldwide readership.