

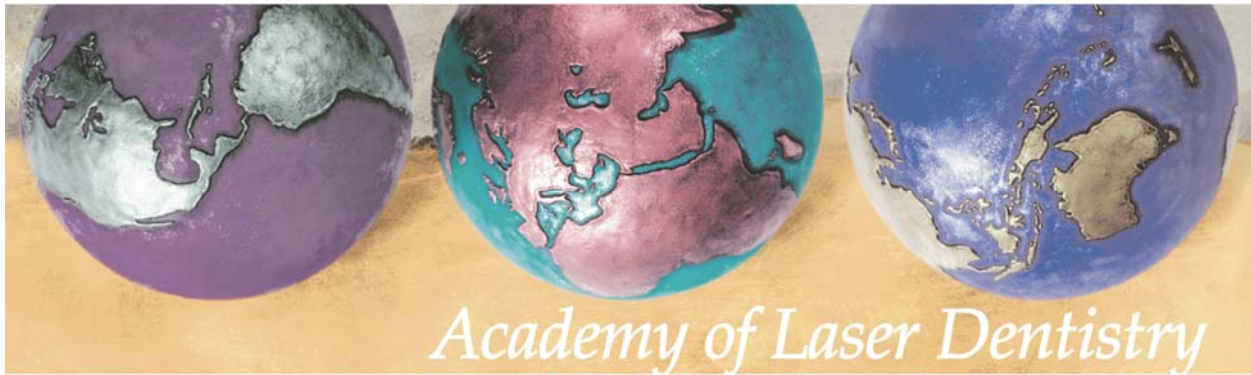


Points to Consider for Integrating a Laser into your Practice

The return on investment for a laser instrument could be analyzed in four ways:

1. Several procedures will be made easier and simpler. Disinfecting an aphthous or herpetic ulcer will not only relieve the patient's discomfort, it will prevent the rescheduling of the appointment because of the presence of the lesion. Tissue retraction for subgingival crown or implant restorations can be performed quickly with excellent hemostasis, ensuring an accurate impression. Laser clinicians report an average savings of ten minutes of appointment time as well as elimination of a majority of cords and medicaments. Soft tissue surgeries are much easier to manage with control of bleeding and redundant or excessive gingival tissue around carious lesions can easily be contoured for access to the preparation as well as improvement of the physiologic contour.
2. Procedures that used to be referred could be treated in the practice, according to the clinician's experience, training, and confidence. Removal of fibrous tissue or commonly occurring fibromas are straightforward; suspicious lesions can be easily biopsied and analyzed for pathology. Revising frenum attachments to prevent or correct periodontal defects are also simply performed with laser energy; a mandibular lingual 'tongue tie' procedure offers almost instant correction for a patient with speech or other oral difficulties.

Tissue contouring during orthodontic treatment can prevent more serious disease if left



untreated; epuli and other ridge abnormalities of removable prosthodontic patients can be eliminated. An operculectomy can proceed with no damage to the erupting tooth.

3. A laser could give the clinician the opportunity to provide new treatments, ones that were previously not available. Aesthetic crown lengthening involving both gingival and osseous tissue removal can be done with precision and predictability. Preparing ovate pontic sites can result in more natural looking fixed prosthodontic treatment, and uncovering a tooth for bonding of an orthodontic bracket could expedite treatment time.
4. In some cases, multiple procedures can be accomplished during the same appointment, in some cases because of time saved in bleeding control or utilizing less injectable anesthesia. For example, recontouring the gingival tissue during restoration of cervical carious lesions, or treating additional carious lesions in another quadrant can increase the efficiency and profitability of the operatory time, as well as provide better patient care.

The attitude and involvement of the office team are critical to the successful integration of a dental laser into the practice. The clinician should make educational opportunities available to all the personnel, and clearly, they should also experience any care using the laser, so their personal testimony can be credible and enthusiastic.

Patients expect a fair fee for dental care, although a major purchase of equipment will usually necessitate an upward adjustment in the fee schedule. The majority of laser clinicians simply incrementally increase their overall charges; only a few practitioners add a surcharge.



Marketing for the dental laser should be straightforward. Many dental patients are aware of the use of lasers for other health care needs, and some may have even received treatment with these devices. These same patients will appreciate the dental office's desire to provide new technology, which in turn will increase the referral number of new patients who also want modern treatment.

Lasers use in dentistry has expanded and improved some treatment options for those clinicians who have adopted the technology. As with all dental materials and instruments, the practitioner must use clinical experience, receive proper training, become very familiar with the operating manual, and proceed within the scope of his or her practice. The potential purchaser should carefully analyze the style and type of the practice to decide how useful the device could be. Moreover, attending introductory courses, seminars, and presentations, such as those at the aforementioned Academy of Laser Dentistry's Annual Conference, or at various State and National Scientific Sessions, are essential before buying.

Because of the varied composition of human tissue and the differing ways that laser energy is absorbed, there is no one perfect laser. However, all of our patients continue to agree that the dental laser is a wonderful instrument.