

Is it Time to Buy a Soft Tissue Laser?

For years I have held off buying a laser for my office. There were several factors that have influenced that decision including the cost of the units, the limited uses and the treatment times. While others may disagree, I am not crazy about the idea of a hard and soft tissue laser due to the above factors. I have 6 operatories and can prep teeth a whole lot faster with my nice electric handpieces that cost a fraction of what a hard and soft tissue laser costs. One of the ways that I gauge how dentists like a new piece of equipment is to get on some of the Internet classified sites for dentists. I have noticed a bunch of hard and soft tissue lasers for sale at a huge discount. What does that say?

Anyway, I was still intrigued by the use of a laser for soft tissue treatments. After hearing the praises of a lesser known company, ZAP Lasers, L.L.C., located in Pleasant Hill, California. One thing that I liked about this company and product was that it was developed by two dentists, Dr. Jay Goble and Dr. William Gianni, who felt dentist were getting overcharged for lasers. This is a similar story to Woody's intra-oral camera company. They have produced two lasers, the SoftLase tm Dental 5.0 Watt and the less expensive SoftLase tm Hygiene 2.0 Watt. These are Diode Lasers. Both units are very affordable at the \$7-8000 range versus other lasers that cost twice as much. They are both very portable and easy to use. The company has been in business for 8 years.

I have been an electrosurgery user for years and have found it to be a valuable addition to my practice. Now the laser has replaced it. The laser is so much more precise and easier to use. With the electrosurgery I was always concerned about gingival recession when using for crown impressions (and it usually did recede). The laser greatly reduces that fear. It is now a regular part of my crown and bridge set up and has improved the quality of my impressions.

While I mostly use the laser for crown and bridge, there are a number of other uses:

- 1.) Gingivectomy/ Gingivoplasty- Note the case pictures presented of a young lady who had just completed adult orthodontics. The original retruded position of the laterals caused an excess of tissue on the buccal as the teeth were repositioned. I suggested the laser gingivectomy and after 10 minutes total treatment time she had a beautiful smile.
- 2.) Frenectomies
- 3.) Excision and Biopsies
- 4.) Gingival Troughing- my most common use.
- 5.) Aphthous Ulcer treatment- while not a surgical treatment it provides a biostimulatory desensitization, which reduces pain and promotes healing.
- 6.) Sulcular Debridement of diseased epithelial lining. Studies are starting to show the bacterial reduction in periodontal pockets with laser use. This can be come a huge part of your practice in the treatment of periodontal problems.
- 7.) Abscess Drainage.
- 8.) Soft Tissue Crown Lengthening
- 9.) Teeth Whitening. While I still prefer at home bleaching kits, if a patient wants laser assisted whitening your can do it.

One of the advantages of lasers is that they are fairly pain free. You can often provide procedures with just some topical anesthetics.

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