

HOW TO DO MORE IN-HOUSE WITH SOLEA

Versatility is the name of the game with the Solea All-Tissue Laser.

As a Patterson Dental territory manager, Walter Turner is passionate about helping dentists find new – and sometimes unexpected – solutions to improve patient care and build their practice. When the conversation turns to the Solea All-Tissue Laser, he frequently finds that it is both.

“It seems to me that most dentists haven’t heard of Solea,” he acknowledged. “Or they’re skeptical of what they’ve heard.”

Perhaps that’s not surprising. After all, an anesthesia-free, pain-free restoration procedure that takes only 10 minutes sounds almost too good to be true. At the same time, you need to do a lot of direct restorations for the ROI on dedicated laser technology to make sense.

But the Solea is more than just a new take on “drill and fill.” As Turner explained, its ability to stimulate and ablate both soft and hard tissue gives it a versatile – and growing – range of applications that can help dentists do more for their patients in their own operatory.

“Here come all the soft tissue procedures they would never have done,” he said. “Here comes Solea Sleep, which is such a great service for patients. Then here comes Solea Perioguide, which is just unfolding for my Solea dentists.”

HOW SOLEA WORKS

The flexibility of the Solea carbon dioxide laser lies in its 9.3-micron wavelength, which can cut both hard and soft tissue, combined with Convergent’s computer-controlled laser technology and foot-pedal control. Solea is the only dental laser that offers a variable-speed (rheostatic) foot pedal. Simply target the aiming beam on the tissue you want to cut and then step on the pedal – harder for hard tissue or softer for soft tissue. “Solea’s simplicity makes it super easy for onboarding doctors to get acclimated quickly,” noted Turner.

Solea quickly induces analgesia in hard tissue by temporarily interrupting nerve fiber conductance, an effect that reliably lasts 10 to 12 minutes. This is caused by the laser pulsing at 1,500 pulses per second, in conjunction with its initial shallow penetration depth (2 microns). Increasing the power allows the dentist to vaporize caries with precision.



Solea also is considered excellent for managing soft tissue without causing bleeding that requires sutures. Because Solea's wavelength penetrates at a depth slightly greater than the diameter of the blood vessel, it results in coagulation, making Solea virtually blood-free.

Alternatively, the Solea All-Tissue laser can be used at low power to warm soft tissue without ablation. This is the concept behind Solea Sleep. During Solea Sleep treatment, laser energy contracts collagen in deeper tissue layers of the soft palate, causing the tissue to tighten, contract and lift. The resulting tissue stabilization helps to improve airway function and can significantly reduce snoring. The whole session takes only 5 minutes.

"When used correctly, the Solea is reliably 'anesthetic free,'" Turner stressed. "And you can perform soft tissue procedures blood-free, with typically a compound topical only."

6 THINGS SOLEA CAN ADD TO YOUR PRACTICE

Turner enjoys creating a comfortable, undemanding environment in which dentists can learn about technology and decide if it fits into their business. "My Solea dentists are all happy, but they all had to go through some sort of journey," he noted, comparing it to the decision process involved in adopting CAD/CAM technology.

"As the competitive world of dentistry changes and there's more pressure being put on dentists to be profitable, they really need to look at why would a patient come see me? How am I different?" Turner observed.

Here are six ways in which Turner has seen Solea help answer those questions.

More Same-Day Dentistry

Because dentists can use Solea for most direct restorations without the need to wait for an anesthetic to take effect, they can provide more immediate care. Turner gave the example of discovering caries in multiple quadrants during a regular hygiene appointment.

"Say the team finds two fillings needed," he said. "They can say to the patient, 'If you have the time, we can take care of these right now with a technology called Solea. Let's get you into this other room.' It takes 10 minutes of the doctor's time."

More Minimally Invasive Dentistry

Other hard tissue dental lasers vaporize only water, creating a "chipping" or "microexplosion" effect to remove enamel. Solea vaporizes hydroxyapatite itself. "The enamel just evaporates," described Turner. "So you're able to remove just what's bad and let the filling material float into all the nooks and crannies and curves and twists."

More Soft Tissue Procedures

Where Turner's customers really discover the versatility of Solea, however, is in expanding their soft tissue services, like flapless crown lengthening. "Crown lengthening was always referred out, typically to a specialist office using more 'dated' methods," he said. "With those methods, it usually bleeds like crazy. But with Solea, it doesn't bleed."

"It's like painting with a brush; it's so precise," Turner continued. "It evaporates the tissue micron by micron. It's like being an artist. And Solea can also greatly enhance the healing process in a faster time frame."

Practices also can use Solea to release tongue ties in adults and children. "When you see an adult have their tongue released for the first time in their life, it's incredible," said Turner. "And for pediatric dentists, that's your wheelhouse. One of my dentists says he does probably one a day, if not three a day."

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More Periodontal Therapy

Solea Perioguide, one of the newest applications for Solea, uses laser energy to disinfect periodontal pockets and remove diseased tissue with minimal trauma and less post-procedure discomfort than traditional periodontal surgery. Solea Perioguide therapy also has been shown to decrease pocket depth and promote new bone formation to help achieve stable periodontal health, even in cases of moderate to severe periodontitis. As Turner noted, keeping such cases in the practice not only boosts patient health and satisfaction, but also benefits ROI.

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– *Walter Turner, Patterson Dental territory manager*

More Sleep Dentistry

Turner shared the success of one of his Solea dentists in expanding his sleep dentistry services in less than a month with the Solea Sleep. “Say the patient has a Mallampati score [size of the tongue base in relation to the oropharyngeal opening] of 3 or 4,” Turner said. “The hygienist explains the Solea Sleep procedure, which involves two 10-minute appointments three weeks apart to achieve a noticeable movement toward a Mallampati score of 1 or 2. It lasts an average of 16 to 20 months, and then it can be treated again.”

“Say a dentist charges \$900 for the procedure,” Turner said. He went on to explain that between three hygienists five days a week, a new Solea Sleep patient could potentially be found at least once a day – bringing in consistent additional revenue for the practice.

Some patients benefit indirectly from Solea Sleep therapy. “Many times the patient in the chair doesn’t snore; however, their significant other does,” explained Turner. “So the hygienist lets the patient know that they offer Solea Sleep in their practice, and that if their partner snores, the practice can help.”

More Patient Satisfaction

As you might expect, the opportunity to avoid anesthetic injections – or to sleep better – serves as a great practice builder. “I remind my dentists to make sure they celebrate Solea treatments with their patients, and to simply ask, ‘Mrs. Jones, if you have any friends looking for a Solea dentist, please send them our way,’” said Turner.

“In the pediatric world, it’s the ‘no shots’ aspect and the versatility of working in all areas of the mouth in a single appointment that has clinicians intrigued,” he added. “Mom and dad are thrilled that their child was treated by a tech-savvy clinician, everything was done in one visit, and the experience was very pleasant – and they tell their friends. So the pediatric dentist grows their practice. One of my pediatric dentist customers recently remarked, ‘I may have to get another Solea.’”

GETTING STARTED WITH SOLEA

Turner acknowledged that the lack of tactile feedback when working with a laser requires a brief adjustment, but emphasized that after the day-and-a-half in-depth training, dentists are ready to start using Solea in practice right away. “That’s what it’s designed for,” he said. “They feel comfortable starting to use their machine on Monday.”

“Even before they make a decision on Solea, we can provide hands-on opportunities. For example, they can cut on an apple for the feel of soft tissue, or on teeth that have been extracted, just to get an idea of it,” he continued.

LEARN MORE

Although Solea’s versatility lends itself to many types of dentistry, Turner acknowledged that some dentists may feel hesitant. “It’s got to be a fit,” he said. “We’re ready when you’re ready.” For those who are intrigued, he recommended asking their Patterson representative or attending local Patterson events to investigate further.

Turner described his Solea doctors as having “clinical fun” taking care of their patients with all that the technology can do. ●