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Striking a healthy balance

02 Jul 2015

When we offer endodontic treatment to patients, it helps if they are, at least, a little bit anxious. I don't want them to be scared, but it is important for them to be concerned about, firstly, the condition of their teeth, and secondly, about the proposed treatment. Similarly, in cosmetic dentistry we need our patients to be a little bit vain, because if they weren't, they wouldn't want the treatment in the first place. Of course, in both of these cases, there has to be a balance. It would be incredibly unhelpful for us, as clinicians, to have an utterly terrified patient, or one that is so dysmorphic that their expectations have become unreasonable.

What we are looking for, therefore, is a sense of equilibrium. Not too much, but just enough. My family's motto has always been *même dans la modération être modérée* – or, 'even in moderation be moderate.' I

remember this idea being embodied by my aunt, who has not long ago turned 92. She always (somewhat ironically) insisted that she did not want to live for a long time, she just wanted to live healthy. She made grand pronouncements in the kitchen about what we should and should not eat, and it turns out that she was probably right about a lot of things. She understood how to live in moderation and she knew the relationship between healthy eating and healthy living, and that's why she has just had a cookbook published.

Of course, food is an important consideration when we're thinking about health. I recently read an article about how experts expect that by 2020, more liver transplants will be due to over-eating rather than alcoholism. [i] Indeed, by the same year, experts fear that at least a third of people in the UK will also be obese. As we all know, obesity can lead to a number of other health complications, including heart disease and diabetes. [ii]

We are fortunate in our profession to be able to help with these concerns. We are all aware of the links between oral health and periodontal disease with both heart disease and diabetes and, as a result, we can be at the very forefront of necessary preventative treatments. And as we do so, we are in the perfect position to be able to help promote a moderate lifestyle and thus potentially extend lives.

We can apply this idea to all aspects of our lives, not just in health care and dietary considerations, and by doing so we can enjoy longer, happier and healthier lives. It can help us be better clinicians and, in turn, make us better patients.

[i] The Guardian News: Liver transplants linked to over-eating not alcohol. Published online: 3/5/15; link: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/may/03/most-liver-transplants-linked-to-over-eating-not-alcohol> [accessed 14/5/15]

[ii] Eckel, R. Obesity and Heart Disease: A Statement for Healthcare Professionals From the Nutrition Committee, American Heart Association, 1997; link: <http://circ.ahajournals.org/content/96/9/3248.full> [accessed 15/5/15]

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