IS IT STILL WORTH TREATING PATIENTS WITH PERIODONTAL DISEASE IN THE NEW ERA OF DENTISTRY?

Current advances in the medical field have facilitated the diagnosis and treatment of various diseases.[1] As periodontal disease (PD) is a widespread chronic inflammatory illness, reaching up to 80% of the Latin America population,[2] the scientific and technological arsenal for its management are made available to dental professionals during academic learning or through continued education. However, despite all knowledge related to PD, it is especially intriguing that even though several studies have shown the possibility of controlling PD for long periods of time, through a regular and effective mechanical control of the biofilm,[3] it remains so prevalent.

On the other hand, therapies that aim to replace teeth are gaining more space. As people prefer to maintain their teeth,[4] and the longevity of teeth and dental implant seems to be similar,[5] it is paradoxical that treatment modalities that replace natural teeth by artificial ones are increasingly popular among professionals and patients, especially if you consider that such treatment proposal does not decrease the prevalence of PD and is only available to a few people.

It is urgent to discuss a crucial point of periodontal treatment. Several studies present a treatment protocol that includes supra-and subgingival mechanical debridement at the same appointment.[6] Because the entire treatment requires only a few sessions, and the patient is not yet able to self-control the biofilm, the risk of periodontal pockets' recontamination increases, thus perpetuating the disease. Patients should receive repeated oral hygiene instructions, supragingival scaling and tooth cleaning before subgingival professional debridement, in order to learn how to maintain a low plaque score and to prevent cross-contamination in the post-active therapy phase.[6] The critical challenge of periodontal treatment is neither the lack of knowledge about the disease, nor the technical complexity involved in its therapy. Patients must change their lifestyle; they also need to be in a periodic maintenance schedule to stay focused on biofilm control.[7] Just by following these steps, you can guarantee long-term periodontal treatment success.[8]

It's unquestionable that treatments with dental substitutes can be considered as an option, especially after evaluating the survival rate of teeth. But it would be important to make more efforts in order to treat PD, focusing on what really works, mainly because it does not seem valid to offer treatment alternatives that are also harmed by the ubiquitous presence of biofilm, like dental implants. Undoubtedly, new cosmetic and reconstructive techniques and technologies have potential applications to satisfy the specific needs of the patient,[9] but as stated by Pjetursson et al. (2018)[10], implants are supposed to replace missing teeth, they are not supposed to replace teeth.

How about giving natural teeth a new chance?

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