

# THE JAWDROPPER™:

## GROW YOUR PRACTICE BY MAKING PATIENT COMFORT A PRIORITY

### Dental Fear: Silent Threat To Patient Retention

**AWESTRUCK DENTAL'S BOTTOM LINE:** There is a very real and critical issue for dentists today: Dental Fear. Research shows that 155 million adults experience some level of Dental Fear, and it is resulting in many adults not going to the dentist annually. Awestruck Dental has come up with an effective, simple device called the JawDropper™, a tool that gives the patient comfort while sitting in the dentist's chair. Using the JawDropper™ is a concrete way to show your patients that you care.

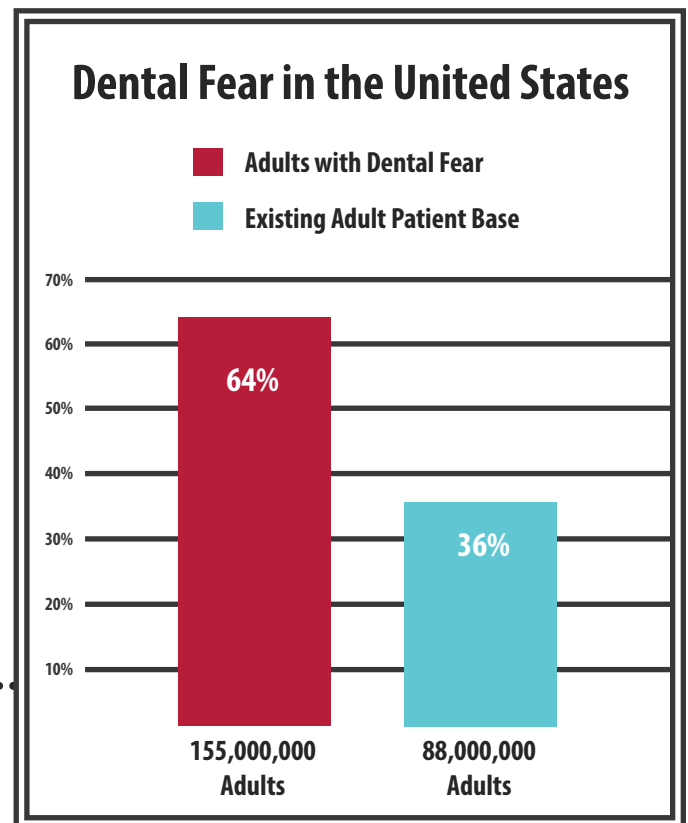
Patient retention remains a critical issue for dentists today. Read any industry magazine, website or blog and the issue is obvious: to grow your practice you must retain patients.

And yet, as dentists consider everything from Twitter campaigns to Starbucks in the waiting room to keep their existing patients, most are unaware of the "silent threat" to patient retention. The Journal of the American Dental Association reports that 48 million people are not going to the dentist.<sup>1</sup> They cite the reason as Dental Fear.

Another 107 million adults in the U.S. have reported moderate degrees of Dental Fear.<sup>2</sup> This brings the number of adults that experience some level of Dental Fear to 155 million. ....

Why is Dental Fear a silent threat to your practice? The ADA journal also cites evidence from a 2007 study that patients are not telling their dentist about their fear and anxiety.

Likewise, dentists may not recognize Dental Fear in their patients. The patient simply stops going to the dentist and the dentist never knows why.<sup>3,4</sup> This silent Dental Fear causes procrastination in scheduling appointments, canceled appointments, no shows, failure to schedule necessary treatments and a reluctance to arrange the elective treatments that are so necessary for profitability in your practice.



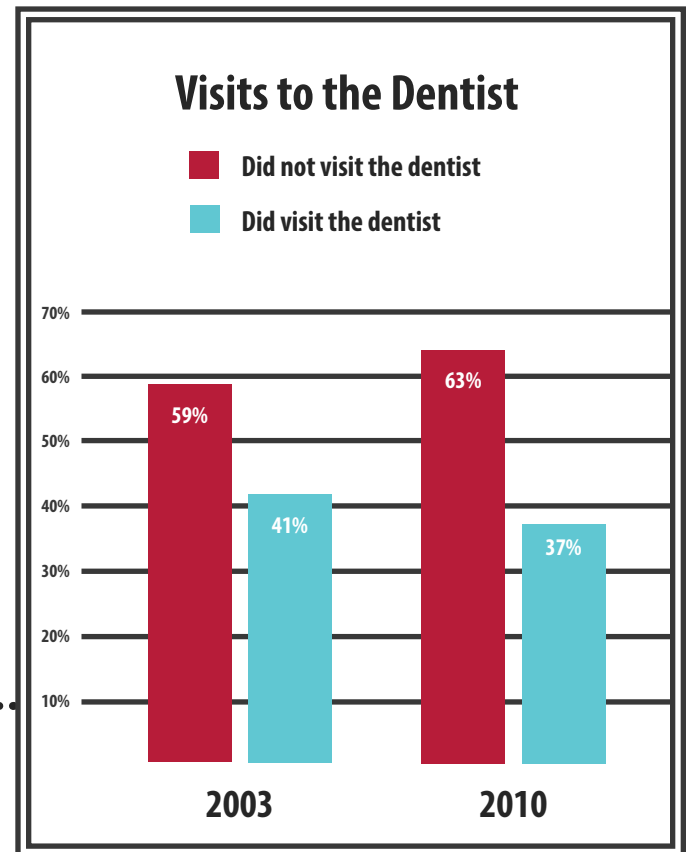
## The High Cost Of Ignoring Dental Fear

**AWESTRUCK DENTAL'S BOTTOM LINE:** Dental Fear and anxiety has remained unchanged over the past 50 years.<sup>5</sup> Dental Fear is a barrier to accessing dental care. Visits to the dentist among American adults overall decreased from 41 percent in 2003 to 37 percent in 2010<sup>10</sup>. It is imperative to find a solution to Dental Fear and anxiety in order to attract adults to go to the dentist.

Despite the massive “comfort dental” movement, the Journal of the American Dental Association reports that the prevalence of Dental Fear and anxiety has remained unchanged over the past 50 years.<sup>5</sup>

Other research supports that we are still not reaching millions...

- Dental Fear is a barrier to accessing dental care. Multiple studies report that people with heightened dental fear and anxiety do not obtain routine care and have more cavities and tooth extractions than the rest of the population.<sup>6,7,8</sup>
- International studies suggest that the problem may be even bigger. In an Australian study, 52.1 percent of people with Dental Fear had not visited the dentist in over five years. Only 14.2 percent of those who feared going to the dentist had actually been to their dentist in the last year.<sup>9</sup>
- Recent research by the Health Policy Institute of the American Dental Association found that visits to the dentist among American adults overall decreased from 41 percent in 2003 to 37 percent in 2010. That's 150 million adults avoiding dental care.<sup>10</sup>



The problem, according to Dr. Gary Klasser, Associate Professor in the Division of Diagnostic Sciences at the Louisiana State University School of Dentistry, is that, while “comfort dental” certainly enhances a visit to the dentist for the average patient, it does not address the needs of those suffering from dental fear and anxiety.

“We are trying to solve the problem with TVs, Bose headsets and better surroundings but are still not getting to the core of the issue,” Klasser said. “The average patient will enjoy watching television during a dental procedure. It will help to pass the time and distract them from the procedure itself. But those people are already going to the dentist. It’s those who aren’t getting to the dentist that we need to attract.”

## At The Root Of Dental Fear Is Control

**AWESTRUCK DENTAL'S BOTTOM LINE:** A significant factor in the fear and anxiety that some people experience when thinking of dental procedures is a perception of loss and control. The American Psychological Association published an article examining Dental Fear in which it argued that dentists should give patients as much control as possible<sup>12</sup>. The ones who solve this riddle and open the door to the 48 million who aren't going to the dentist are the ones who will be industry leaders.

A significant factor in the fear and anxiety that some people experience when thinking of dental procedures is a perception of loss of control. Dental fear and anxiety due to the perception of loss of control is widespread. In one study, it ranked even higher than fear of flying.<sup>11</sup> In the dentist's office, patients lie supine in a dental chair for significant periods of time, with their mouths open and their personal space – particularly the sensitive area around the face – invaded by a practitioner. The patient is typically awake and aware of noises and sensations without being able to see what is happening.

The American Psychological Association published an article examining Dental Fear in which it argued that dentists should give patients as much control as possible, concluding "People just hate the loss of control that occurs during dental procedures".<sup>12</sup>

"People who are suffering from dental fear or anxiety need to have some control, or at least feel like they have control," Klasser said. "When patients have the perception of control, they do better. And an important factor is that when anxiety is reduced, so is the perception of pain. Perceptions of pain and anxiety go hand in hand."

Klasser is convinced that giving the patient a feeling of control over the situation will diminish the anxiety just as, in a medical setting, patient-controlled anesthesia, or PCA, provides a greater sense of control by the patient, and therefore more satisfaction (and less morphine), than if administered by others.

Klasser acknowledges that, for dentists, ceding control to the patient may not be feasible, and so may ultimately only be symbolic. The key, he says, is giving the patient the feeling of control. "The ones who solve this riddle and open the door to the 48 million who aren't coming in are the ones who will be industry leaders."

## Patient Participation Key To Reduction of Anxiety

**AWESTRUCK DENTAL'S BOTTOM LINE:** Awestruck Dental has come up with the solution. The JawDropper™ allows the patient the feeling of control. The JawDropper™ addresses another issue relating to dental fear or anxiety: pain. Finally, the JawDropper™ is ideal for maintaining an open mouth during a digital scan of the patient's mouth and is far more suitable during this type of procedure than a bite block. The JawDropper™ is an innovative new solution for patient comfort through patient participation.

What if you were able to reduce the perception of pain, fear and anxiety in every patient? If you could accomplish this, it would mean that all the money you spent on painting your office in soothing colors, all the money you spent on the Bose headsets and the big TVs, was worth it because you were actually retaining patients. It is six times cheaper to keep an existing patient than it is to get a new one into your office, so addressing your patients' fear and anxiety isn't just good dentistry, it's good business. It is also substantially cheaper to attract new patients by referral than through any marketing campaign. Happy patients refer their dentist to their friends, acquaintances and family. Patients that have fear and anxiety only tell their horror stories about the dentist, the hygienist and the procedure. If you want to address patients' fear and anxiety by giving them the perception of control and the feeling that they are participating in their care, there is an effective, simple device: The JawDropper™.

The JawDropper™ is jaw dropping in its simplicity. There is a tooth-engaging mouthpiece on one end, which is placed on the lower incisors. The patient exerts minimal downward traction on the handle end, pulling down to relax the jaw muscles, comfortably and effortlessly. This not only allows the patient to open the mouth wider and to maintain a wider open position during procedures, but the JawDropper™ allows the patient the feeling of complete control. It also alleviates the pain and discomfort caused by the mandibular muscular fatigue that occurs with no assist device or with a bite block. As an additional design benefit, the team at Awestruck incorporated low-volume suction into the JawDropper™ which, while facilitating most procedures, means there is one less device in the mouth taking up valuable real estate.

Important for dentists is that while the JawDropper™ allows the patient the feeling of control – through patient participation – the real control is in the practitioner's hands. The JawDropper™ is effective at relaxing the mandibular muscles and maintaining a wide mouth opening giving the practitioner optimal access to the treatment area without having to rely on the patient to "open wide".

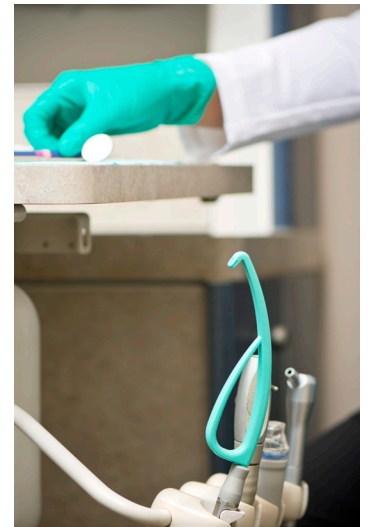
The JawDropper™ also addresses another issue relating to dental fear or anxiety: pain. The JawDropper™ relaxes all of the jaw muscles effortlessly so that jaw pain and jaw discomfort are avoided. In addition, because the patient is relaxed, the tensing of jaw muscles that often accompanies fear and anxiety is prevented. The JawDropper™ is also ideal for maintaining an open mouth during a digital scan of the patient's mouth and is far more suitable during this type of procedure than a bite block. The JawDropper™ is an innovative new solution for patient comfort through patient participation.

## The Results Are In: Patients And Practitioners Prefer The JawDropper™

**AWESTRUCK DENTAL'S BOTTOM LINE:** Early studies using the JawDropper™ have generated incredible results. 82 percent of hygienists found the JawDropper™ useful with their patients. 93 percent of patients found the JawDropper™ more comfortable than a bite block and Isolite®.

### Early studies using the JawDropper™ have generated incredible results:

- 82 percent of hygienists found the JawDropper™ useful with their patients.
- 60 percent of hygienists said the JawDropper™ reduced interruptions.
- 60 percent of hygienists said the JawDropper™ gave greater access to the mouth over a bite block and Isolite®.
- 64 percent of hygienists said more than half their patients would benefit from using the JawDropper™.
- 75 percent of patients found the JawDropper™ more comfortable than a bite block and Isolite®.
- 65 percent of patients found the JawDropper™ helpful during dental procedures.
- 93 percent of patients who used the JawDropper™ wanted it available at dental appointments.



### Using The JawDropper™ Puts You In Control

The 48 million adults who aren't seeking dental care and the 107 million that are avoiding you represent a massive financial opportunity. If you address Dental Fear, Anxiety and Pain, you have the ability to control the growth of your practice.

Any dentist looking to retain patients and grow his or her practice – and who isn't? – can easily see that there is an untapped segment of the population who wants a dentist that cares about them, a dentist who cares about their fear and anxiety, and who uses innovative devices to address their need for control and their need to participate in their own dental care.

The JawDropper™ is a tangible, non-verbal method of communicating that you care about your patients' fear and anxiety and have taken action. Taking care of your patients' hidden needs – the Dental Fear, Anxiety and Pain – with the JawDropper™ is crucial if you want to inspire these patients to refer you to friends, family and colleagues. Referrals are absolutely key for growing your business. You don't just want patients, you want raving fans.

Comfort dentistry is at a crossroads. Although it has made great strides to address dental pain and general comfort, it has yet to make a significant impact into the 48 million who are still not coming to the dentist due to fear and anxiety.

The new frontier of comfort dentistry will address the underlying causes of Dental Fear, such as perceived loss of control. The industry leaders are already moving proactively in this area and looking to offer solutions like the JawDropper™ to their patients. After all, the JawDropper™ is a simple way to ease dental fear and anxiety and keep patients returning – and referring.

You may feel that the JawDropper™ is not appropriate for every procedure or patient, but consider the following questions:

- Is every patient of mine free of fear and anxiety when in my chair?
- Are my hygienists viewed as patient advocates and do they demonstrate compassion toward my patients?
- Do I tend to use more anesthesia with patients that have fear or anxiety?
- Is my practice losing patients to the comfort dental franchise down the street?
- Are my current patients raving fans of my practice and my team because they know we care?
- Is my next patient referral worth \$1.25?

You may feel you have good answers to these questions. But – after careful evaluation of your practice and your team – you may come to realize that to be competitive means being innovative and that to win the battle for patients you must be the best.

If you aren't using the JawDropper™, what happens if your competitors are? Using the JawDropper™ is a concrete way to show your patients that you are innovative and that you care.

## Sources

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- <sup>10</sup> Dental Care Utilization Declined for Adults, Increased for Children During the Past Decade in the United States, M. Vujjic, K. Nasseh, T. Wall, *Research Brief of the Health Policy Institute, American Dental Association*, 2003.
- <sup>11</sup> [http://dental1.org/Education\\_Center/Conditions/Anxiety\\_Dental\\_Fear\\_and\\_Phobia](http://dental1.org/Education_Center/Conditions/Anxiety_Dental_Fear_and_Phobia)
- <sup>12</sup> "The Mental/Dental Connection: More psychologists and dentists are working together to help patients—and their own practices," by Rebecca A. Clay, *American Psychological Association Monitor on Psychology*, 2000, <http://www.apa.org/monitor/julaug00/dental.aspx>.