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HEALTH

Easing the pain of dentistry

I can't believe I'm actually doing this. I'm sitting, quite relaxed, in a dentist's chair. I'm chatting quite happily with Peterborough dentist Christopher Moore. I'm not shaking. I'm not sweating. I haven't fainted from fright. I've even used the N-word (NEEDLE) without gibbering.



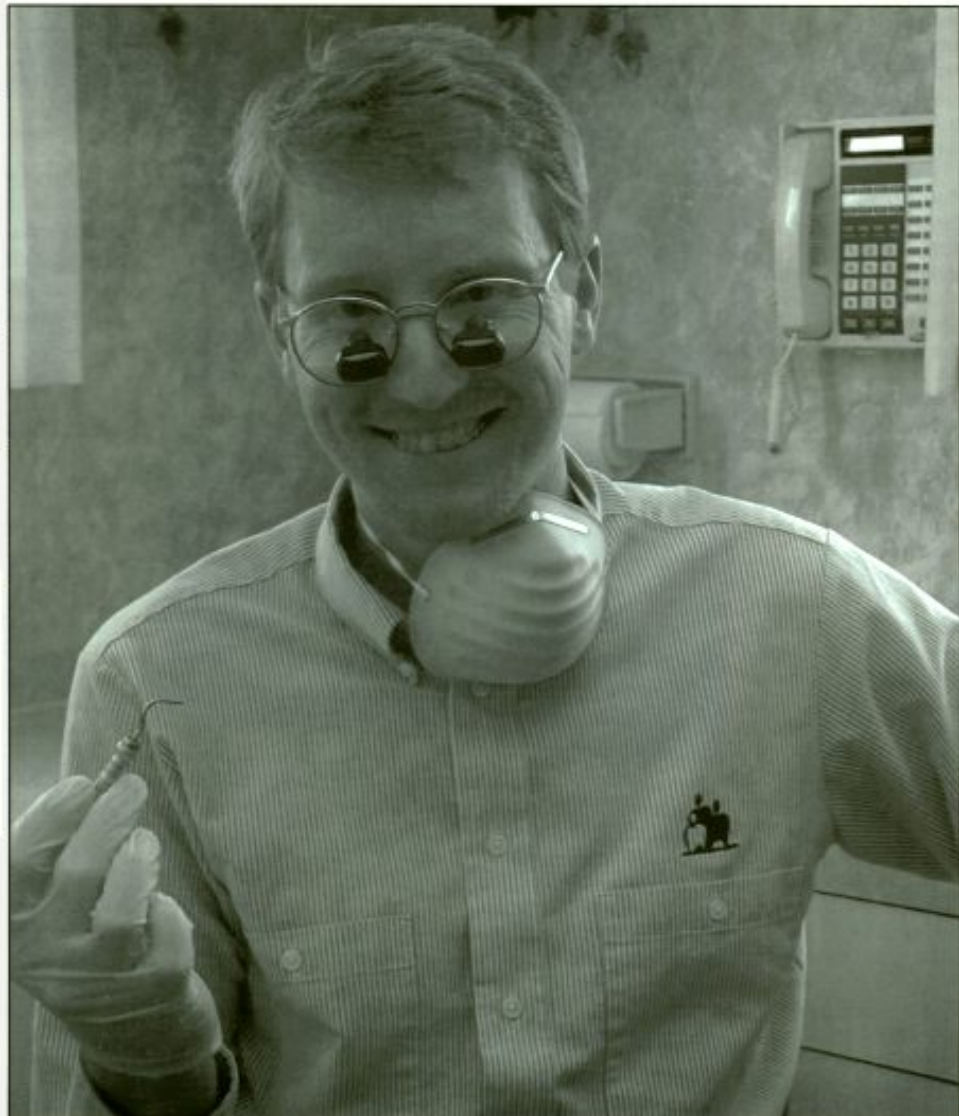
FEATURES
GARY BALL

This is no place for a man who suffers from the mother of all dental phobias, a phobia that cost me most of the teeth in my head. But I am here, thanks to Mayor Sylvia Sutherland and Examiner Managing Editor Ed Arnold.



A couple of weeks back, Her Worship, Sylvia Sutherland who writes a Sunday column for the Examiner, made mention of a new piece of equipment (the latest in a long string) acquired by her dentist.

"It is a device that freezes the tooth and gum electronically without the necessity of a needle," she wrote. "I am glad





to have lived so long."

Editors have highly-developed curiosity bumps and this brief mention caught the eye of Arnold. He concluded that there might be a story of interest to readers in this magical device. Her Worship kindly put me in touch with Moore, her own dentist.

And that is what put me, dental phobia and all, in a dentist's chair, without having to be dragged through the door kicking and screaming. As a youngster, I suffered through a year or two of pretty primitive dental work that made me swear I would never voluntarily go near a dentist as long as I lived.

That sort of fear of dentists isn't at all uncommon, Moore says, despite the fact that modern dentistry is a far cry from the pain (real or imaginary) that I remember.

I stayed away from dentists as long as I could. The result was serious gum disease that resulted in the loss of most of my teeth about 15 years ago. Since then my own dentist, E. Paul Macklin, of Peterborough, and his staff, have laboured mightily to save the few remaining teeth and have gradually eased my fear of the dental chair, drills and needles.

Moore, who has been practicing in Peterborough for about three years, after a stint in Pembroke, is an enthusiastic user of newer dental technology and has consented to give me a brief introduction to what's new in the dental world, the gadgets that impressed the mayor.

But he is quick to point out that that he doesn't consider himself to be any kind of a pioneer or out and front of his colleagues in Peterborough. He wants to make that very clear right from the outset.

The device that Her Worship thought did away with needles is, in fact, a sophisticated computer controlled injection system (Yes there is a needle) called the Wand.

Moore says that a microchip controls the flow of anesthetic to the

"It freezes as you go, so you can penetrate the tissue and freeze the tissue before you go into it. It's slowly administered so very rarely do people feel anything."

Although the Wand system has been available for something like four or five years, it has only been a part of Moore's practice for the past couple of months. Patient response, he says, has been positive.

"But I think most dentists today are very good at giving

also makes use of new drill-free air abrasion equipment and even a television camera in his work.

For shallow cavity work, Moore says, the air abrasion system uses a combination of air and fine (sandlike) powder to remove tooth decay. Without the whine and vibration of a traditional drill, he says, patients find this equipment comfortable. And, he says, it is precise enough to allow for microdentistry, the practice of finding and treating decay as early as possible, of removing as little tooth material as possible and making fillings as small as possible.

To aid in that early detection of decay, particularly small cavities or decay in the grooves of teeth, Moore uses a tiny hand-held television camera and video monitor to show

'This (Wand system) just allows us to give the feeling of a little more security, that things have changed, that they're not going to feel the pain they may have felt in the past.'

Christopher Moore
dentist

painless needles with their teeth. regular syringes, but it (pain) is a subjective issue with patients, so it's a matter of mak-

ing the experience less invasive in their minds. Dentists are generally very good at giving freezing."

"This just allows us to give the feeling of a little more security, that things have changed, that they're not going to feel the pain they may have felt in the past."

Moore says that he has been working in his practice to make things a little less "stereotypically dental".

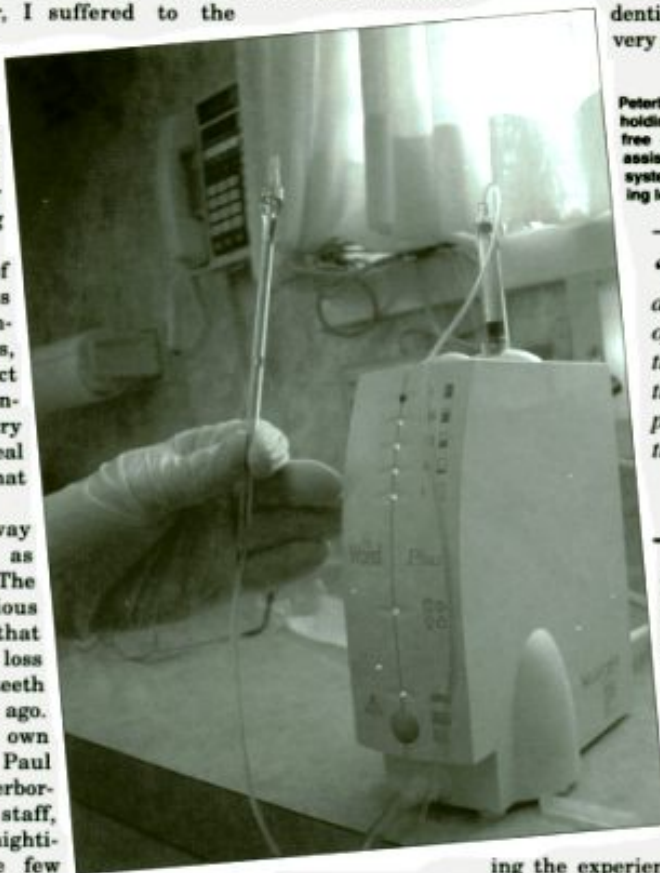
In addition to the Wand he

patients what is happening with their teeth. Moore says one of the bonuses of the camera technology is keeping patients very involved in the work that is being done.

"Patients are much more involved. Co-diagnosis is very important in dentistry today. This is more a visual thing that allows me to explain what I'm seeing and what's happening with the tooth."

Despite the changes in dental technology that have happened in the decades since my first, frightening trip to a dentist, Moore has no illusions that all the changes will make a trip to the dentist something to look forward to.

He says he and his colleagues will settle for making the whole experience a lot less negative.



Gary Bell, Examiner
Peterborough dentist Christopher Moore is holding an air abrasion tool used for drill-free dentistry. He also has a microchip assisted injection delivery system (Wand system) which makes the process of freezing less painful.