

Integrating CaMBRA into Private Practice

Caries Management by Risk Assessment

By Peter Mackley



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Many practices have already taken steps to integrate all or various aspects of Caries Management By Risk Assessment (CaMBRA) into their day to day routine, however as someone who is actively involved in this area I'm asked on a daily basis, "How have other practices successfully integrated CaMBRA".

Much scientific research has been reported highlighting the benefits of CaMBRA. CaMBRA is a prudent approach in treating dental caries, and more importantly preventing the onset of the disease in the first place. Many dental staff initially believe that CaMBRA would be most beneficial for children. This is correct, however CaMBRA offers significant benefits to people of all ages. We have an aging population with many individuals who are already exposed to multiple known risk factors. These patients can welcome the new advances which CaMBRA offers, minimizing any impact on their lives. Practices offering high end restorative and cosmetic solutions should also be active with CaMBRA, as they too can benefit by maintaining regular baseline data. Having the ability to simply identify the underlying bacterial change that can compromise previously placed work can be greatly beneficial, assisting with patient education and their acceptance of their own responsibilities.

By building CaMBRA into your practice, patients become more aware and educated of the risk factors that cause dental caries. CaMBRA has evolved to be much more than a lecture directed towards the patient about diet or how frequently they brush and floss. The Californian Dental Association Foundation offers a wonderful resource for further education of CaMBRA principals. The October and November 2007 editions contained a two part series, "A practitioners guide to CaMBRA", which included eleven separate papers. http://www.cdafoundation.org/who_we_are/publications

Having an intimate knowledge of caries risk factors cannot be overstated however one of the difficulties in persuading dentists to conduct routine caries risk assessments is that there has not been a rapid and accurate method to identify the level of cariogenic bacteria in

the mouth. Patient questionnaires can be very time consuming often causing time limitations within the allocated appointment. Some dentists also find it difficult to adequately compensate for the time that they have allocated. Many practices who conduct caries risk assessments have also identified the need to be doing more than just counseling the patient, so what's the next step?

New Advances

Today we have a new technology that provides the dental team with a 30 second chair-side test that identifies the amount of aciduric/cariogenic bacteria in the plaque biofilm layer. The CariScreen test provides the dental team with an efficient and cost effective way to identify individuals who are at risk, even though today they may have presented with no visual symptoms (cavities, radiographic or white spot lesions).

It is well documented that dental caries is a bacterial disease. The CariScreen test can provide the dental team with a real insight as to



CariFree a complete system in a box

what is happening at a bacterial level, the underlying cause of dental caries. One of the attractions of the CariScreen test is that it forms part of a complete system, known as Cari-Free. The CariFree system has a simple step by step decision tree taking the user from initial diagnosis right through to treatment and the ongoing monitoring of the patient as an individual. The CariFree system provides the dental team with a complete system in a box approach, making it simple to follow and administer.

Education

The successful implementation of CaMBRA first requires a common level of education for all the dental team. By sharing the knowledge that supports the basis of CaMBRA all team members can actively play their part. At some time I'm sure we all have tried to implement a new system or procedure, to find that it doesn't work as well as expected. This is generally due to insufficient education or understanding by those who are asked to participate in the process. I'm sure if you have an office computer system that you took on the training component to help ensure that you and your staff had a smooth implementation process. Implementing an effective CaMBRA system is no different. So let's take a look at a typical dental office and how a shared understanding of CaMBRA can be beneficial for everyone.



Dr Kerrod Hallett with staff from the QLD Health

The Dentist

The dentist's role in implementing CaMBRA is key to the success of the whole process. Understanding the benefits of CaMBRA from both a clinical and business perspective is extremely important. The dentist's role is to outline the practice goals. An example of this could be, "To diagnose and treat the underlying cause of dental caries at the earliest possible opportunity, minimizing surgical options". I'm sure many patients would be attracted to a practice who promotes these principles.

Practice Goals

It is extremely important that the practice goals are outlined to your patients, new and old. This helps to define what makes your practice unique. A welcome brochure, a newsletter, a plaque hanging on a prominent wall and even your yellow pages advertisement all help to set the scene. Practices that have successfully implemented CaMBRA have been proud to promote the fact that they ultimately want to improve the dental health of each and every patient.

They actively tell their patients that they have and use new screening technologies in order to offer an even higher level of service. Patients love to hear that their dentist is one of the leaders, taking advantage of these new and wonderful advances on their behalf.

Understanding Risk Assessment

Understanding CaMBRA risk assessment can be a new concept for some. In general terms "no cavities" has been the gold standard of measurement for good dental health. Leading research has now demonstrated that dental caries is in fact a model based on the balance of "Risk Indicators/Risk Factors vs. Protective Factors". One of the most important aspects of this research is simply that dental caries is a balance of "Cariogenic Bacteria vs. Non-Cariogenic Bacteria". This further reinforces the benefits of a rapid chair-side bacterial test, as individual lifestyles and habits can change many times throughout ones life.

The American Dental Association Council on Scientific Affairs, have produced a guideline to further encourage dentists to employ caries risk assessments in their clinical decision making process. The guidelines follow evidence based research and are designed to assist with the classification of each patient, as either a low, moderate or high caries risk individual. What's more they have made recommendations to assist the dentist with therapeutic treatment options encouraging the use of antibacterial therapy for home use and fluoride varnish for moderate and high risk patients. http://www.ada.org/prof/resources/pubs/jada/reports/report_fluoride.pdf

The Role of the Dental Team

Receptionist or Office Manager

In most practices the patient interacts with a number of the dental staff from the receptionist or office manager who greets the patient on arrival right through to the dentist. The receptionist or office manager is a key person in the implementation of any new system, as they are the first point of contact for the patient. This makes them the ideal person to introduce any new changes within the practice. On greeting the patient, they could simply say, "Mrs. Jones, we are now conducting a simple painless bacterial screening test as part of every check-up. This enables us to determine the amount of decay causing bacteria that is living in your mouth. We will record this and will monitor any changes from visit to visit. Our aim is to prevent and stop any decay from occurring in the first place. Please have this information leaflet that further explains the test and its benefits". This type of approach informs the patient and makes excellent use of staff resources which further encourages a team approach. Providing the patient with a consistent message helps to ensure their acceptance. This provides the practice with two additional benefits, first the patient will most likely tell a number of friends about their new dental experience. Secondly, by appropriately informing the patient before they see the dentist or hygienist/therapist, this eliminates the potential of any unproductive time.

Hygienist/Therapist

For practices that are fortunate to have a hygienist or therapist, then this person can often be the ideal one for the CaMBRA roll, however some dentists do prefer to perform the CariScreen bacterial test as this provides them with a more complete diagnostic picture. The hygienist or therapist, often have more frequent contact with the patients enabling



Patient screening using the CariScreen test

them to simply perform six monthly or annual CariScreen bacterial tests. Most users find this can be simply incorporated into a re-care or hygiene appointment without placing an additional burden on the hygienist or therapist.

Most hygienists or therapists are well aware of many of the caries risk factors. There are a number of risk assessment questionnaires that are readily available however some still can be quite time consuming. The CariFree caries risk assessment questionnaire can be simply completed within 2-3 minutes following appropriate training. It is based on the extensive and current evidence based research of Professor John Featherstone.

Economical Benefits

The economical benefits of any new system must be considered. What is the initial set-up cost? What hardware is required? What consumables will I need? These are all important questions to ask, however one question that should always be asked is, "What will my return on investment be"?

CaMBRA offers an excellent return on investment for those who choose to implement it. Practices can find that CaMBRA can become totally self supportive just within a couple of months. Also some practices have commented that they are now offering more comprehensive treatment options to individuals who previous were considered to be problematic, opening new untapped opportunities.

Patient Therapy

The objective of any patient treatment or therapy is to remove the risk of disease. In the past this has been difficult to quantify, except for the checking of any new cavities. Now with the aid of the CariScreen test, patients can be quickly and simply screened at set periods or following a therapy cycle. This provides the dental team with valuable data that was not previously available. Having the ability to confirm that a positive health change has occurred and that the patient is compliant provides a new and valuable resource for the whole dental team.

There is a wide variety of oral health care products available today, however there is growing scientific evidence that supports a broad spectrum antimicrobial approach, incorporating ingredients such as sodium hypochlorite. The use of xylitol has also proven to be beneficial, which can offer an exponential benefit when used with appropriate amounts of fluoride. There is also a growing evidence base that supports a pH management strategy in the fight against dental caries. The CariFree system offers an oral rinse therapy program that incorporates all these concepts.

Regardless of your preferred therapy program one of the main considerations of CaMBRA is having the ability to measure your treatment outcomes, offering a medical based approach to oral health care.

If you would like to know more about CaMBRA, the CariFree system and in-office training programs, please feel free to contact Essology or visit us at the ADX08, booth 84. ♦

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