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Dental gagging problems? Train and relax!

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Dental gagging can be a burden in many respects. Implant retained dentures may be considered the solution for edentulous patients suffering from dental gagging. But the process of applying these devices may reveal gagging problems to such an extent that special approaches will be necessary. For dentate patients dental gagging may impede proper oral care, oral treatment or the wearing of a partial prosthesis. A 'treatment of choice' seems to be lacking, since research on dental gagging is almost exclusively restricted to case studies. More basically, reliable and valid procedures for evaluating any treatment do not exist. So notwithstanding the prevalence and inconveniences of dental gagging, knowledge about etiology, incidence and treatment is minimal. At the Center of Special Dental Care of the University Medical Center Groningen, the Netherlands, dental gagging is a field of interest since more than 10 years. A diagnostic instrument has been developed and a weekly multidisciplinary office hour for dental gagging patients has added considerably to our expertise, and it still does. This has resulted in a multidisciplinary method that will be described and illustrated with video fragments. Pros and cons of implants with dental gagging will be clarified. Recommendations and specific tips will also be provided for specialists who want to transcend the level of home remedies for their gagging patients. The core issues of this presentation are firstly that gagging patients seem to benefit from learning to become 'an expert' in the awareness of an approaching gag reflex, secondly, that dental implants are not a solution for every patient, thirdly that removable dentures are preferable to dental implants if possible, and finally that the implantology trajectory should be preceded or accompanied by a training to enhance the patient's control over the gag reflex.

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