American novelist Edith Wharton, shown here bundled up in Newport, R.I., once put off a holiday trip in Europe with her husband, Teddy, because of Teddy’s toothache. Photo/Provided by the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University

Commentary

Telling the whole tooth
Not all the pundits got the flossing story quite right

By Patricia Walsh, RDH
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Edith Wharton was the first woman to be awarded a Pulitzer Prize in fiction. “The House of Mirth” was written while she was residing in Paris. Her beloved home in Lenox, Mass., which she helped to design, is one of the lesser-known tourist attractions in New England. The formal gardens are as lovely as a Paris park; the gardens rival those of the stately Belle Époque mansions in Newport, R.I.

Wharton, who had no formal education, was taught by nannies and tutors as a small child. Newport was another beautiful town from her privileged upbringing. Her meticulous diary and prolific handwriting reveal that she and her husband, Teddy, often put off a trip from Paris to the south of Europe due to his medical condition. He was in a great deal of pain from terrible teeth. The doctors were trying a new “serum treatment” on him. This was in 1903, prior to penicillin. The methodology of this “serum” strategy wasn’t described, but I do know this: In France in the early 1900s, horse blood was thought to contain antibodies that could cure many illnesses. Regardless, Teddy never recovered enough to travel to the Wharton’s intended holiday destination. He eventually returned to the United States without Edith. His mental and physical health declined and he passed away in America.

A hundred years ago, money and position would not have been enough to keep you out of pain. Today, we might hear of a famous couple not being able to make it to their villa in the French Riviera due to weather-related flight delays. But an interfering toothache would likely be pretty low on the list of reasons to cancel a vacation.

Edith Wharton wasn’t the only celebrated author to discuss the woes of dental health. Her contemporary, Robert Louis Stevenson, spins the tale of a medical student named Fettes in “The Body Snatcher.” Fettes makes a horrifying discovery after having a tremendous toothache. Perhaps with the transition to modern dentistry and the discovery of antibiotics, the “toothache” used as a literary tool to connote foreboding will disappear into the dust of library shelves.

Robert Burns, the famous Scottish poet, agonized over dental pain and how it affected his ability to write. In 1793, he wrote: “The delightful sensations of an omnipotent toothache so engross all my inner man, as to put out of my power even to write nonsense.” Two years later, Burns composed, “Address to The Toothache” in Scottish dialect.

Edith Wharton once said, “The man with a toothache thinks everyone happy whose teeth are sound. The poverty-stricken man makes the same mistake about the rich man.”

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Shakespeare laments the sad loss of power old age brings in “As You Like It,” writing: “Last scene of all, That ends this strange evenfated history, Is second childishness and mere oblivion, Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.”

Toothaches, tooth loss and dentistry in general will always be discussed in popular culture, although today’s writing may less likely be poetry or novels. While the flossing controversy was playing out back in 1903, the focus now is on proper oral care, such as flossing, as a part of a daily dental routine.

Hygiene News

Gelato prophy paste is top prophy paste for fourth consecutive year

Announced at the turn of the new year were The Dental Advisor’s annual Product Awards, one of the most respected awards in the dental industry, known for evidence-based clinical and laboratory research and evaluation.

At the top of the prophy paste category was once again Gelato Prophy Paste, marking 2016 as the fourth consecutive year Gelato has won Top Prophy Paste among dental professionals.

Gelato, produced from the New Jersey-based manufacturer Keystone Industries, was evaluated by 35 professional consultants in 2,500 different uses. At the end of the study, Gelato Prophy Paste received a 95 percent clinical rating. Sixty-three percent of consultants said they would switch to using Gelato Prophy Paste, while 80 percent said they would recommend it.

Consultants’ open-ended comments on the paste included such phrases as, “does not splatter,” “easy to rinse,” and “cups are color-coded and easy to open.” Keystone’s paste joins elite company as one of very few products to win four years consecutively (2013, 2014, 2015, and now 2016), but has done so because “does not splatter,” “easy to rinse,” and “cups are color-coded and easy to open.”

Dispersible cups eliminate cross-contamination

The paste comes in boxes of 200 individual disposable cups for convenient use. The disposable cups also eliminate cross-contamination and include a prophy ring for ease of application on the patient’s teeth. For more options, the paste is also available in six-ounce (exports only) and 12-ounce jars.

Available in four different grits (fine, medium, coarse and x-course), Gelato will take care of your various stain removal needs. Typically, hygienists use the fine grit for routine use and the medium grit gives a little more stain removal power. The coarse paste is required for removing moderate to heavy stains. No matter the job, Gelato Prophy Paste provides exactly what dental professionals need, the company asserts.

Keystone Industries continues to put forward the largest assortment of great-tasting Gelato flavors such as pina colada and orange sherbert. The paste line also has mint, cherry, bubble gum and raspberry flavors for a plethora of flavor options to satisfy picky clients. The individual cups are clearly labeled for quick retrieval and application.

Quality and price

Overall, Keystone is proud of this highly regarded review from The Dental Advisor. As a company that strives to create the best quality products at the best price, Keystone is proud to assert that “Gelato Prophy Paste has hit the market with quality and price.” According to the company, the statistics and feedback are what gave Gelato such a high rating and awards four years running now, but they also speak for the high-quality work Keystone Industries puts into its American-made dental products.

Across the board dentists and lab technicians alike give Gelato and the various amounts of other products great feedback, according to the company.


About Keystone Industries

Keystone Industries, a privately held company, founded in 1908, has maintained a strong reputation for producing innovative, high-tech dental products in both the operatory and laboratory realms.

Its dedication is driven by the need to provide customers with the finest quality materials while developing products that meet and surpass customer expectations. These expectations have continued to excel as the company has moved forward with expansions around the globe.

(Source: Keystone Industries)

Photo/Provided by Keystone Industries

Prophy Paste has hit the mark with quality and price.

Disposable cups eliminate cross-contamination.

Quality and price.

About Keystone Industries.

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know the one I mean), I was tempted to post a sign on my dental chair’s overhead lamp stating: “I don’t care what ‘Good Morning America,’ the New York Times and your Facebook feed say, you still have to floss your teeth.”

Health bloggers from here to Timbuktu jumped all over the fact that flossing was dropped from the guidelines issued by the U.S. departments of Agriculture and Health and Human Services. If nothing else, it started a conversation with my patients about interdental cleaning in general. As the saying goes: There is no such thing as bad publicity as long as they spell your name right.

I thought a bit about the phrase “scope of practice” and how many times I had heard it mentioned by colleagues in my profession. In dentistry we know our limitations and expertise. We are legally and ethically bound not to overstep our areas of knowledge. As presenters at dental meetings, we are even obliged to carry special insurance in the event that we commit a transgression in this delicate area of “expertise.”

I dug a little into the backgrounds of some of the “expert” health writers for major newspapers. One health writer, who was quoted quite a bit during the recent flossing “skirmish,” was armed with a master’s degree in literature from Oxford University. Impressive. Her master’s thesis was based on the early 20th century Russian poet Vladimir Nabokov. Nabokov was a fascinating character with the same sort of aristocratic childhood as Edith Wharton. He also wrote about the profundity of dental woes.

“A toothache will cost a battle, a drizzle and an insurrection.”

I’m considering submitting an article to Car and Driver magazine suggesting that oil changes might not be a necessity. After all, I own a car.