Handpiece engineers focus tightly on clinicians’ needs

NSK expands North American presence, creates handpieces in-house in response to requests from dentists

By Robert Selleck
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Lots of companies like to talk about being responsive to customer needs. NSK, a global manufacturer of dental handpieces and other small-motor equipment, walks the talk with devices created solely in response to customer feedback. One of the most telling examples is the S-Max Pico, the handpiece with the industry’s smallest neck and head size. “In our Asian markets especially, dentists were asking for a smaller-head handpiece to use with patients with smaller mouths,” said Rob Gochoel, NSK marketing manager — North America. “We kept hearing how difficult it was to use a standard or even miniature handpiece for restorative work in patients with smaller mouths, especially when working on posterior teeth. Having a decent amount of room to see and work in is critical when you’re trying to be as minimally invasive as possible and leave as much healthy tooth undisturbed as you can.”

Industry game changer

To address the need, NSK engineers and product developers went to work on a concept they called an ultra-miniature handpiece. “It’s more than 20 percent smaller than the smallest miniature out there,” Gochoel said.

Coming up with the new device wasn’t just a question of taking a standard system and making everything smaller. Many of those existing parts were already about as small as the materials and demands on them would allow. So, in many ways, the design team had to start from zero — rethinking the engineering but keeping the core goals the same: durability, ability to stand up to frequent autoclave sterilization and delivery of as much torque as possible. The result, Gochoel said, is an industry game changer.

Growing global interest

“The S-Max Pico has been capturing a lot of attention at the major dental meetings,” Gochoel said. “We’ve been taking a lot of orders from dentists who don’t even feel the need to test it in the operatory first.”

One surprise for NSK has been the level of interest from pediatric dentists across the world — quickly elevating the product from being a specialty product piquing interest in every market across the globe.

At the other end of the spectrum, NSK also has recently launched a line of premium handpieces that incorporate its micro-production technology while also setting a new benchmark for durability and performance. According to NSK, the Ti-Max Z series handpieces perform at a remarkably low noise level with virtually no vibration — two requests the company had frequently heard from clinicians looking for fewer distractions and increased patient comfort. “The two products together definitely announce NSK as a key player in the industry, one who knows how to listen to customers and quickly get finely crafted, durable products to market based on that input,” Gochoel said.

More innovations expected

As the company increases its presence in the North American market, with high-visibility booths at the bigger trade shows and a growing distribution system, it’s hearing more from customers in the U.S. and Canada. “We’re getting a lot of feedback,” Gochoel said. “It’s all about making dentists more productive. Coming up with improvements that make dentists’ lives easier — and make their patients more comfortable.”

NSK engineers already are looking into some new ideas based on multiple inquiries the NSK team has been receiving from customers. A big part of the reason NSK is able to move so quickly on customer feedback is that virtually all of its research, development, design, manufacturing and testing is accomplished in house. That doesn’t just mean assembling the final devices; it means building the vast majority of the parts that go into those devices.

More than 17,000 individual parts go into the production of NSK handpieces, and close to 90 percent of those parts are built and tested in-house by NSK.

‘Expect perfection’

This total-control approach to its products is what enables the company to use the slogan, “Expect perfection.” Gochoel said the company approaches each new product with the goal of creating the perfect handpiece. The result is that the company keeps setting the bar for itself higher — while removing limits on what its customers are able to imagine.
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Two new products introduced

Palodent Plus
Palodent® Plus, the newest sectional matrix system from DENTSPLY Caulk, is designed to consistently deliver predictable, accurate contacts. The company reports that the rings offer consistent separation force on molars and premolars, provide excellent retention on the tooth and work with the matrices, wedges, and wedge guards to seal the restoration and minimize the amount of finishing required. A Palodent Plus Trial Kit is available as a cost-effective way to try the system, with the 7.5 mm matrix for added coverage. Visit www.palodentplus.com or call (800) 532-2855 for more information.

Calibra Esthetic Resin Cement
Calibra® Esthetic Resin Cement, now with a new light cure Veneer Kit and dual-cure Automix Syringe, is billed as being easier to use than ever before. The new Automix syringe is offered in five shades: translucent, light, medium, dark and opaque to create an aesthetic match for any patient. It also uses Shade Stable™, so a restoration should always look as vibrant as it does on the day it’s cemented. The company describes the product as still providing strong and beautiful restorations, but now being even easier and more versatile. Visit www.calibracement.com or call (800) 532-2855 for more information.
Give Kids a Smile gets $100,000

CareCredit continues support of American Dental Association Foundation for sixth consecutive year

For the sixth consecutive year, CareCredit has continued its support as founding donor of the American Dental Association Foundation Give Kids A Smile Fund, with a $100,000 donation. The donation was made earlier this year in New York City, where the 10th Anniversary of Give Kids A Smile Day was celebrated by opening the NASDAQ market and touring Give Kids A Smile events at the New Jersey Dental School and Bergen Community College Hygiene Program.

The funding will help the ADA Foundation provide grants in support of Give Kids A Smile programs to help achieve GKAS objectives of raising awareness of the high level of oral disease suffered by children primarily in underserved areas and to enable volunteer dental teams to provide free dental care and education.

In 2011, CareCredit’s contribution was used by the ADA Foundation as continuity-of-care grants awarded to 11 non-profit organizations to:

- Provide screening and preventive services during the annual Give Kids A Smile Day held in February.
- Establish a liaison/case management system to ensure children cared for during the event receive necessary follow-up treatment and ongoing care.
- Implement oral health awareness initiatives for the public and medical professionals on a community basis.

Cindy Hearn, senior vice president of marketing for CareCredit and a member of the ADA Give Kids A Smile National Advisory Committee, said, “Research shows that poor oral health directly impacts a child on critical levels, including the child’s ability to eat, sleep and focus in the classroom. Each year, the grant recipients use the funds to greatly improve the lives of children in their communities, and we’re proud to have helped increase access to dental care through our support of the ADA Foundation and our involvement with the American Dental Association’s Give Kids A Smile program.” Gene Wurth, executive director, ADA Foundation, said, “The ADA Foundation greatly appreciates CareCredit’s continuing support of the Give Kids A Smile Fund, which we will use for grants to support programs that help achieve the GKAS program goal of cavity-free kids by 2020.”

For more information or to donate, visit www.givekidsasmile.ada.org.

For 25 years, CareCredit has helped patients get needed and desired care. CareCredit is a health care credit card that can be used as a payment option for certain expenses not covered by insurance or to bridge payment when desired care exceeds insurance coverage, and it is accepted at more than 90,000 dental practices. For more information on CareCredit, visit www.carecredit.com or call (800) 300-3046.

(Source: CareCredit)