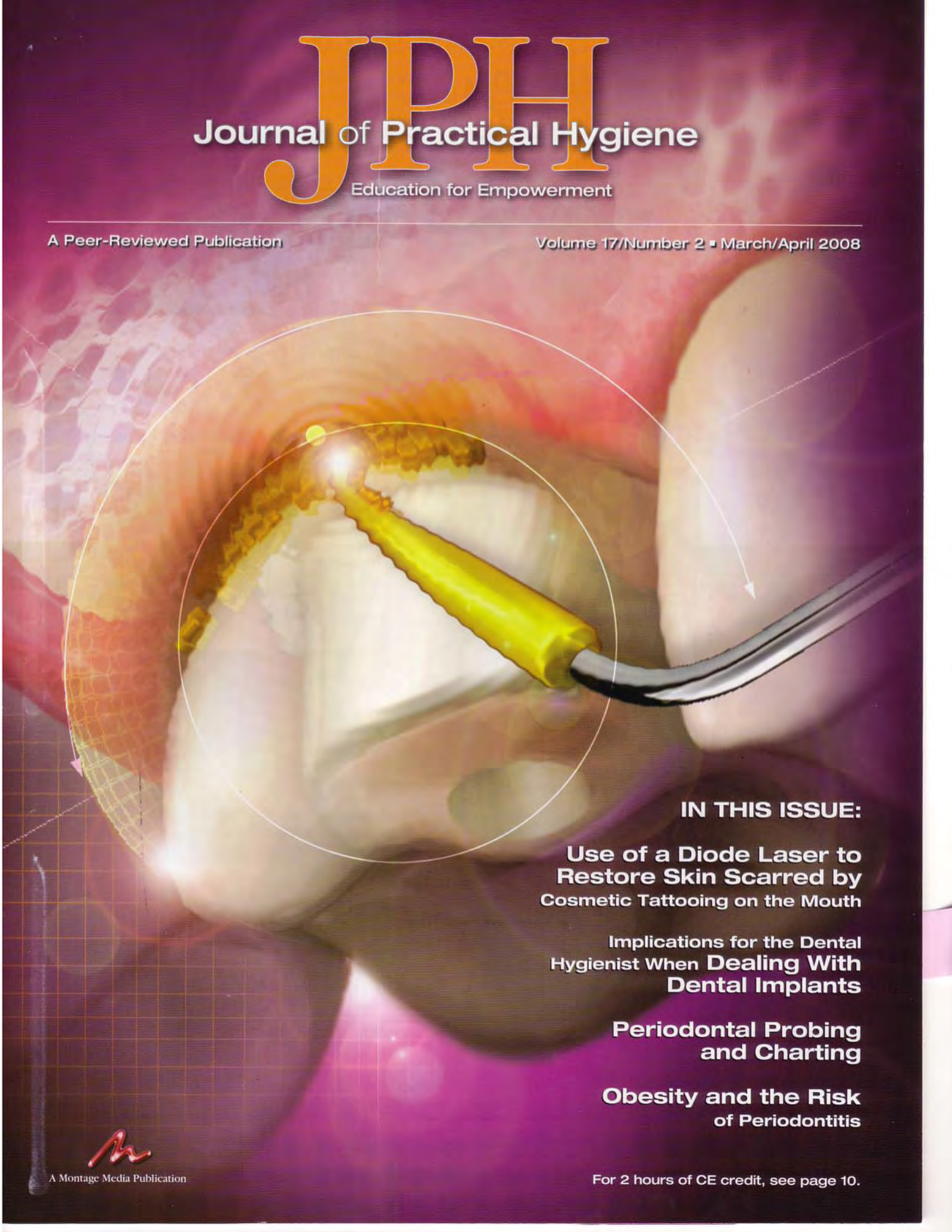


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A Montage Media Publication

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Periodontal Probing and Charting

Diane P. Kandray, RDH , MEd*

Periodontal probing and charting are diagnostic indicators of a patient's periodontal condition. The data is used as a foundation for developing a diagnosis, treatment planning, selecting appropriate instruments, and presenting patient education. Probing and charting are two reliable indicators that provide numerical as well as graphical representations of periodontal attachment levels, bone levels, and contours.

Emergent Technologies

COMPUTERIZED SOFTWARE

Most dental professionals would agree that recording measurements and creating a graphical chart are time consuming tasks. Recent technological innovations have, however, revolutionized the reporting of periodontal measurements, allowing clinicians to record probing depths using computerized software programs to measure the extent of the peri (eg, Florida Probe, Florida Probe Corporation, Gainesville, FL) (Figure). Computerization allows the user to efficiently record probing depths as well as gingival recession, the location of the mucogingival junction, clinical attachment levels, furcation grades, mobility, bleeding, or suppuration points. This gives the clinician more time to spend assessing the patient's periodontal condition and treatment needs. Periodontal charts can be saved and later retrieved according to the date at which the information was entered, and then used as a comparison tool. This is an excellent



Figure. Periodontal charting software allows the clinician to efficiently and accurately measure and document the patient's existing condition.

way to track the advancement or improvement of periodontal disease.

Software programs also provide the option to print several different types of charts for release to insurance companies or to a referring dentist. Periodontal charts can be printed in the most basic format including only the probing depths, or can be printed in color as a graphic and made available to the patient to enhance patient education.

Voice-activated periodontal software allows the user to save time by speaking into a headset microphone. A 10- to 15-minute session is needed to calibrate the software to recognize the user's voice. Hygienists may work hands free and eliminate the issues of cross-contamination. An advantage of the audible readings is that the patient is made aware of the probing depths being recorded followed by an explanation of the impact the findings have on the individual's periodontal condition.

ELECTRONIC PROBES

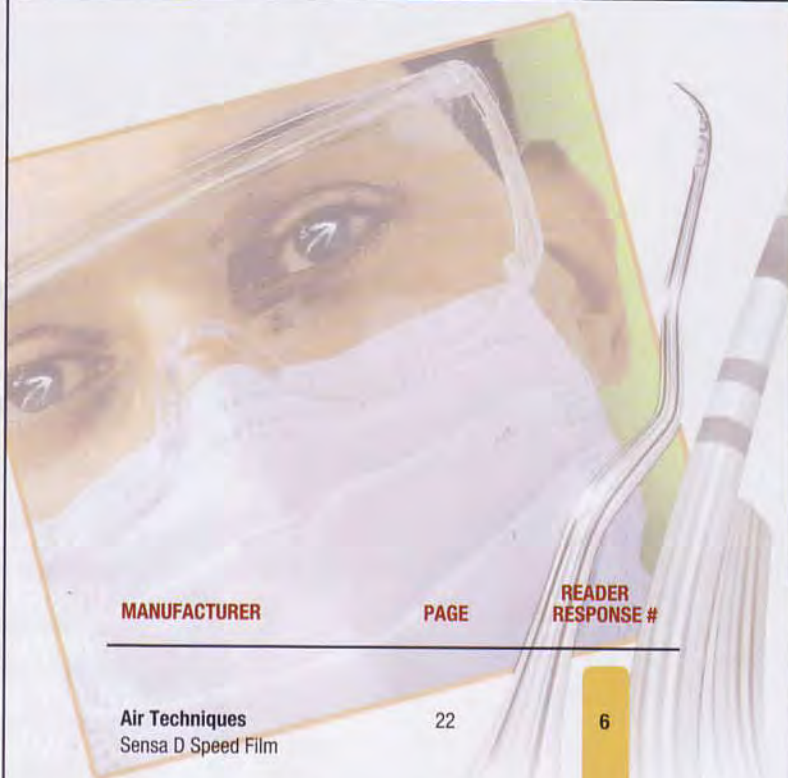
Electronic periodontal probes are designed to use optical computer technology to automatically measure and record periodontal pocket readings. An electronic probe is inserted into the sulcus, and periodontal measurements are transmitted to the computer. The electronic probe uses custom-force technology to record probing depths. The probe is designed to exert the same amount of pressure regardless of the practitioner using the device. The most apparent advantage of utilizing technology to record periodontal data is to save time during the assessment phase of the dental hygiene appointment.

“Recent technological innovations have...revolutionized the reporting of periodontal measurements, allowing clinicians to record probing depths using computerized software programs to measure the extent of the peril.”

Conclusion

Periodontal charting software, voice-activated periodontal recording, and electronic periodontal probes are all designed to improve the efficiency and accuracy of measuring and documenting periodontal conditions. Periodontal probing must be done routinely on patients to track the progression of periodontal disease. Dental hygienists will likely benefit from the incorporation of these new methods of probing and charting and should begin to incorporate them into their practices.

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