Dental surgeries should think pink, UK designers say

LONDON, UK: When refurbishing their premises, dentists who want relaxed patients should think about how their customers want to feel when they visit the dentist. According to a design team from London, a mid to light pink helps to relax the muscles and is an ideal colour for a dental surgery.

Feelings experienced when entering a new environment can in part be attributed to colour. Colour is light that travels in waves from the sun and the energy from light is absorbed through the eyes. It stimulates the pituitary and pineal glands, which in turn control some of the body’s systems, including hormonal changes. Research suggests that pink is a calming colour and so is regularly used in rooms where a tranquil effect is desired, for example, in hospitals, rehabilitation centres and even prisons.

However, according to commercial interior designers at Lima Europe, dental practices should avoid cerise and hot pinks, as these could add on an increased heart rate, respiration and brainwave activity. “Light colours such as white and cream or pale pastel shades evoke feelings of freshness and tend to have a calming, relaxing nature, especially lighter greens and warm yellows,” Aliz Ördög, a designer at Lima Europe, told Dental Tribune Online. “Red in rooms appears harsh, can increase one’s heart rate and could possibly be even more alarming to some patients, as it has obvious connotations of blood. Orange is also stimulating rather than calming so unless used as an accent colour to evoke a fun element of the brand these colours would be best avoided for dental surgeries, as they would most likely make the majority of patients feel uneasy or giddy. Black would be a difficult colour to work with for practical reasons, it absorbs light and can hide dirt. In terms of patient experience, it can also feel oppressive.”

“However, it is not necessarily the case that these colours cannot be used, more the fact of how they are used. In small quantities, black in particular could be incorporated into various design schemes. Dental surgeries do not necessarily have to be, and I personally think should not be, just white, a sympathetic, well thought-out design scheme can feature most colours except bright pinks, reds and oranges,” the designer added.

When working closely with their clients, London interior designers Ördög and her colleague Zoltán Madalófi carefully discuss colour palettes and the feeling the particular space is intended to evoke. Zoltán explained: “Some of Lima’s business clients, such as dentists’, doctors’ and cosmetic surgeries, come to me wanting their reception area to reflect their brand identity whilst also creating a feeling of cleanliness. However, it is extremely important to produce the correct atmosphere for the customer or client, which includes considering the psychology of colour; a consumer is not likely to return on the basis of liking a brand’s colour palette but may do so if he/she felt relaxed and safe in the environment. When a soothing effect is needed, a pink in a muted tone can be very successful, as can a restful green.”

According to Ördög, dentists are tending to move away from just the practical to more of the aesthetic. As design and style filters into all areas of life today, the environment in which they work cannot reflect this. Also, because colour plays an important part of our overall experience when visiting a building or room, it can influence mood and our physical experience to some extent. The use of colour to improve clients’ experience, helping to make them feel at ease, is being given increasing attention because it can be viewed as an aspect of customer service.

When it comes to work clothes, dentists should stick with white and not experiment with different colours. “White coats are universally known and accepted as garments worn by medical professionals or experts. They also represent cleanliness and are synonymous with hygiene. It is probably not appropriate to change this, as the credibility of the dentist may be compromised,” Ördög told Dental Tribune Online. “However, in theory it would be great fun to see dentists in pale pink or sunshine yellow coats—perhaps this would help calm or cheer up patients and lighten the mood of children or those who really fear visits to the dentist.”

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