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FINDING COMFORT IN A WINK AND A SMILE

A Conrad dentist, Dr. Schuyler VanDyke, is using several innovative solutions for health problems that typically haven't been remedied through dentistry.

Until now.

At her clinic, Sunset Dental, VanDyke still sees patients who need general or cosmetic dental work, yet she is also restyling many patients' overall well-being while brightening their smiles.

"I'm still doing the basics, with fillings, crowns and dentures. You master that after some years," says VanDyke. However, she continues that work while offering anxiety-free dentistry to patients who are uncomfortable when undergoing dental work.

"For anxiety, we give people oral, conscious sedation. Anxiety-free dentistry uses Triazolam. We can use Nitrous Oxide to start, if needed," she said. "I've never had anybody who didn't fall asleep for awhile. We put a mouth pad in before we start.

"They don't remember [the work being done]. It really has evolved as I've evolved."

The Chateau native's practice has also grown to offer relief to patients with Sleep Apnea.

"There are so many people out there who don't know why they don't feel well," VanDyke notes.

Sleep medicine is starting to provide answers to people who stop breathing while asleep. The result is inadequate sleep needed for good general health.

When people stop breathing, they grind their teeth, VanDyke explains. "When they don't breathe, the muscles of the jaw get active and stimulate the mouth to go into a grinding mode. It's the body's way of opening the airway."

Many patients find help with CPAP machines that deliver Continuous Positive Airway Pressure. A CPAP machine is the size of a small shoebox with a flexible tube connecting the machine with a mask worn over the nose and/or mouth. By pushing air through the airway passage at a pressure high enough to prevent apneas, the machine works for most people.

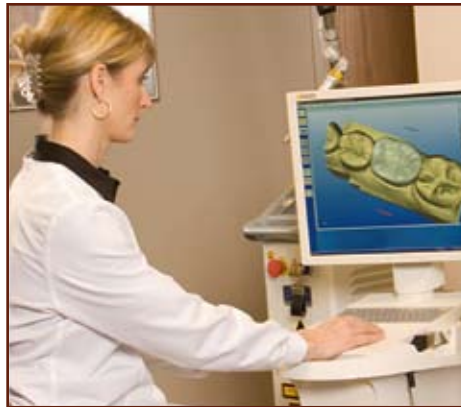
If CPAP is inconvenient or uncomfortable, VanDyke can use Oral Appliance Therapy. "We move the jaw forward to open up the airway," she explains.

VanDyke is a member of the American Academy of Dental Sleep Medicine. She studied out of state to become certified at making the oral appliances.

"I've actually worn them. I tried them out so I can relay information to a patient in a very real way," she says.

In addition to Apnea treatment, VanDyke also treats Temporomandibular Disorder (TMD), in which the joints, muscles and nerves of the jaw are not working properly. The result is facial pain, headaches, trouble eating and speaking.

VanDyke says, "Apnea and TMD—They have become my latest two passions."



As with Apnea, those with TMD may grind their teeth, VanDyke explains. "A part of the jaw bone is being pushed inside the joint causing damage that pinch nerves and jaw muscles," she tells.

A sleep appliance, properly fitted and worn at night, is often just what a patient needs to overcome TMD pain.

"This is one of the subspecialties of dentistry," VanDyke says. "Not everybody is interested in doing this. Some [appliances] we have to fiddle around with." The wrong appliance can make Apnea or TMD worse if they are not formed correctly.

VanDyke received her education at the Portland, Oregon, Health Science University—School of Dentistry. She attended Montana State University—Bozeman for pre-dentistry coursework. She opened her own clinic in January, 1993. **AM**

For more information or to schedule a consultation appointment, call Sunset Dental at (406) 278-3609 in Conrad.



~Amy Joyner is a Montana native who has been writing news articles for 20 years. Her specialties are real estate, history, and economics.