

## Fear and loathing

Sixteen per cent of UK patients are scared of injections according to a recent survey of what dental procedures patients most fear.

The survey of more than 750 patients who had undergone scaling and root planing within the past six months revealed a range of negative feelings experienced by patients whilst they were in the dentist's chair.

UK patients came out fairly well compared with other EU countries, with as many as 30 per cent of Italians claiming to suffer from injection phobia. One in five of the patients surveyed would prefer to have scaling and root planing without an injection, choosing prolonged discomfort during treatment rather than a brief encounter with a needle.

The results show that more than half of UK patients already undergo the

procedure without prior pain relief. They may have made the right choice, as the 45 per cent who did receive prior anaesthesia complained of pain and lasting gum soreness at the injection site.

Whilst a minority enjoyed their regular visits to the dentist or hygienist, most UK patients were extremely apprehensive and found it something of an ordeal, significantly more so than their counterparts in Germany and France. This difference of opinion across the EU begs the question, why?

Are British practitioners adequately explaining the need for an injection and then making the anaesthetic process as painless as possible? Could they benefit from taking some advice from neighbouring countries on the approach to patient anxiety, or is it just a matter of equipment?

Eight per cent of patients

admitted to cancelling appointments because of their fear of injections, and 10 per cent said they had deferred even making an appointment for the same reason.

It is evident from these results that injection phobia is a large part of the decision making process for many patients.

Of the 48 per cent of UK scaling and root planing patients interviewed who needed follow-up treatment, 11 per cent did not return, partly due to the cost and a feeling that it was not important, but also because of the discomfort and fear of a further injection.

These absentees affect profits, and failed follow up appointments could also render the initial treatment less effective, resulting in future problems for the patient.

The survey was done on behalf of Dentsply. ■