



John Flucke, D.D.S.

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Boost for air abrasion

Helium may just be the missing link for success.

I entered the realm of minimally invasive dentistry in the mid-1990s with the purchase of an air-abrasion unit. At the time, the device was the talk of the profession, and units sold briskly.

But sales slowed when market saturation reached about 20 percent. Air abrasion had acquired a bad reputation, which kept dentists away in droves. In a market as small as dentistry's, if someone sneezes, everyone seems to catch a cold.

Some complaints about air-abrasion were legitimate. Though air abrasion was sold as a "hand piece replacement," many doctors found the devices messy and about five times slower than a high-speed hand-piece.

Manufacturers also failed to properly train dentists. Many units were shipped without a word regarding proper technique, which naturally made the devices difficult to use.

I spent a lot of time tinkering with my device before I went live with patients. By the time I began to use it clinically, I had developed a good feel for the unit and its limitations. For example, to control messiness, I purchased an auxiliary vacuum unit that helped remove the excess dust and overspray created by the unit. I remember many doctors were amazed that there was a vacuum cleaner that could be used in addition to house suction.



If you're a practitioner who liked air abrasion, but encountered problems with speed and discomfort, Crystalmark Dental Systems Inc. (www.crystalmarkdental.com) may have devised a unique solution.

I've been tinkering with a Crystalmark air abrasion unit since late last year. The device is rugged and offers simple controls that are easy to understand and use. It comes with a connection for house air, and separate controls for air pressure and powder.

What makes this unit unique, however, is that it allows you to supplement the airflow with helium. The folks at Crystalmark told me that helium made the unit cut more efficiently and with less sensitivity.

I was doubtful initially, but the addition of helium does seem to increase cutting efficiency while decreasing sensitivity. I haven't done any scientific analysis, but my anecdotal experience with the machine has been very favorable.

If you've been thinking about micro-dentistry but have avoided it due to problems with air abrasion or the cost of a hard-tissue laser, take a look at the Crystalmark helium solution. It's one more thigh-tech tool for success.

Dr. John Flucke of Lee's Summit, Mo., is a technology editor for *Dental Practice Report* and can be reached at jflucke@denticle.com, 816-525-7373 or on the web at www.denticle.com

CRYSTALMARK DENTAL SYSTEMS, INC.

613 Justin Avenue, Glendale, CA 91201 USA
Phone: 818-240-7596 Fax: 818-247-3574 TOLL FREE 888-264-4337