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A Structured, Evidence-Based Approach to Biofilm Management

Andrew Terry, Dental Therapist, Dental Hygienist & Senior Lecturer, University of Sydney



In busy clinical environments, oral health therapists and hygienists face increasing pressure to deliver effective care while maintaining meaningful patient engagement. To connect with patients on both a safety and personal level, it is essential to review medical and social histories and check in on their current oral hygiene practices at the start of each appointment. When done in an engaged and patient-centred way, this process can take valuable clinical time. For this reason, Andrew Terry advocates for clinicians to adopt modern, evidence-based approaches that optimise clinical contact without compromising care. Central to this approach is a structured **Minimally Invasive Therapy (M.I.T.)** workflow.



M.I.T. begins by disclosing the patient's biofilm to identify areas they may be missing in their oral hygiene routine, allowing clinicians to offer simple corrections early in the appointment. The workflow then moves directly to air powder polishing to efficiently remove stains and disclosed biofilm prior to scaling. Correct powder selection, based on the amount and type of stain present, helps minimise tissue impact and avoid unnecessarily drawn-out appointments.

Visible calculus is then removed using appropriate power-driven instruments like an ultrasonic scaler, significantly reducing reliance on hand instrumentation. Hand instruments remain important for final checks; however, the use and the overall treatment time is reduced through this clever approach. **As Andrew explains, "Time is of the essence!", and adopting minimally invasive, efficient methodologies is key to delivering high-quality care in today's busy practice environments.**

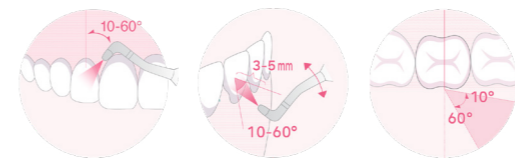


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Longitudinal studies have shown that targeted air powder polishing is more effective at removing biofilm than traditional prophylaxis methods. Andrew highlights that treatment decisions are guided by the patient's individual AAP periodontal classification, whether presenting with gingival health, gingivitis, or staged and graded periodontal disease. Selecting the appropriate nozzle and powder is therefore essential, as powder choice directly influences both clinical effectiveness and patient comfort.

In practice, Andrew determines his approach based on stain type and severity, using a 1–10 classification scale, with severe staining falling within the 8–10 range. For these cases, he selects the **NSK FLASH pearl** 54-micron calcium carbonate powder, which is highly effective on tenacious stains and, due to its spherical shape, is easier on restorative materials. Unlike sodium bicarbonate powders, it also presents a lower risk for patients with uncontrolled high blood pressure. As this is a coarser powder, it is not used directly on gingival tissues due to the potential for gingival abrasion.

For a stain scale of 4-7, Andrew recommends the **NSK SOFT pearl** 65-micron glycine powder to help remove moderate stains and biofilm. Some peripheral spray can be tolerated by the gingival; however, as with NSK FLASH pearl, Andrew advises angling the spray away from the gingival margins and soft tissues.



Andrew's first go-to powder is **NSK Perio-Mate Powder**, used with the jet nozzle on the Perio setting of the Varios Combi Pro2. Referring to the stain scale, he typically selects this powder for the 1-3 range, where mild stain and biofilm are present.

NSK Perio-Mate Powder is a 25-micron glycine powder, which is preferred when working around the gingival margin, soft tissues, and lightly inflamed tissues. As Andrew explains, "It's the safest powder and allows me to comfortably angle the spray towards the gumline when needed."

This powder-first methodology integrates seamlessly with ultrasonic scaling, forming a structured and efficient workflow. He emphasises that when introducing this approach, it is important to clearly explain the rationale to patients. Over time, patients embrace the change and with experience, "clinical contact time has been optimised fully", says Andrew.



This evidence-based approach supports improved long-term maintenance outcomes and periodontal management. For clinicians new to air powder polishing or powder selection criteria, education and training are key. Arming yourself with the right knowledge and technique builds confidence – and ultimately, patients benefit from more comfortable, efficient care.

Education

Join us at our upcoming workshops to learn more about M.I.T. and experience the new NSK Varios Combi Pro2 in action.

Topic:	PERIO MASTERY – POWDER, POWER & PRECISION	
Presenters:	Andrew Terry Dental Therapist Hygienist Senior Lecturer	Sarah Beach Oral Health Therapist (Adult Scope) Dental Hygienist, Dental Therapist
Cost:	\$495 incl. GST	
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