Digital radiography that seems designed for pediatric practices

By William F. Waggoner, DDS, MS, Pediatric Dentist, Las Vegas

Is there a technology you've come to rely on so much that you can't imagine how you ever got along without it? For me, that technology is digital radiography with flexible wireless sensors.

When I first started private practice, we used film radiography exclusively. After a few years, we invested in a wired digital sensor system. It didn't take long to realize that a large number of children, especially the young ones, couldn't tolerate the hard sensors. So, after a few months, we went back to film. For the next several years, I never gave it much thought, other than when my staff would complain about having to clean the chemical processor.

About eight years ago, however, I discovered and invested in ScanX phosphor storage plates — now more commonly called flexible digital sensors — for our two offices. Manufactured by Air Techniques, the small, soft, flexible, wireless ScanX sensors are comfortable for any pediatric patient who can tolerate a film radiograph, unlike hard sensors.

Recently, Air Techniques introduced the ultra-compact ScanX Swift, which I obtained for a third pediatric office that we just opened. Here are 12 advantages I have come to appreciate about ScanX in general, and this new Swift model in particular:

1) Excellent image resolution. ScanX images enhance your case acceptance by helping you show the patient's parent the extent and location of any problems.

2) Faster image processing. All ScanX models process images in literally seconds, a mere fraction of the time it takes using film.

3) Larger image area. The image area with ScanX is up to 38 percent larger than with a wired sensor. This makes you much more likely to capture the complete coronal-to-apical length and not miss a root apex or distal cusp, which means fewer retakes.

4) Easy image manipulation. Brightness and contrast can easily be manipulated, and areas of the film can be magnified for better viewing and diagnosis.

5) Same placement technique as film. ScanX digital sensors are placed in the patient's mouth just as X-ray films are.

6) Easy software integration. ScanX software integrates easily with most imaging software.

7) Less radiation. Wth ScanX, the X-ray exposure can typically be 80-to-85 percent less than that required for film, which is something your patients' parents will appreciate.

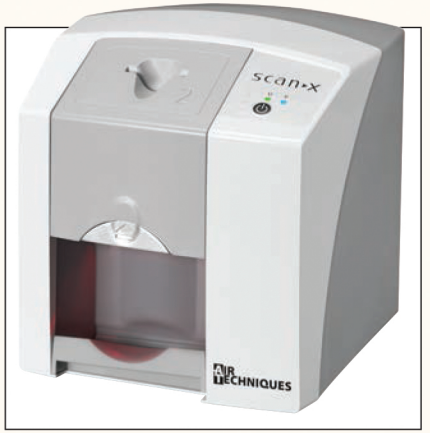
8) Quick image review and saving. When you view the scanned image, within seconds you can determine if you've captured the desired image. With a couple of keystrokes, you can then save the image into the patient's electronic chart.

9) Digital storage and transmission. Electronic charts eliminate the need to store X-rays in bulky manila files and space-hogging file cabinets and allow instantaneous transmission through email.

10) No chemicals. With ScanX you don't have to deal with and pay for costly film packs and messy chemicals, or deal with the hassle of chemical disposal.

11) Affordability. ScanX sensors are a fraction of the price of hard sensors and can be reused hundreds of times. There's also no need for costly insurance or annual maintenance.

12) Chairside compatibility. The compact size of the ScanX Swift processor makes it perfect for chairside use or for placement just about anywhere in the office.



ScanX sensors are 30 times thinner than wired sensors, so they'll fit even the smallest mouth. Retakes are easy because of the speed with which images are scanned and available. Photo/Provided by Air Techniques

If I had to pick the most important advantage of using the ScanX Swift, it's the fact that its sensors can be used with 100 percent of the children who can tolerate regular film X-rays. ScanX sensors are 30 times thinner than wired sensors, so they'll fit even the smallest mouth. If you ask my staff, however, their favorite advantage of the ScanX Swift would probably be the fact that the images are scanned and available so quickly, so if a retake is needed, they know it almost immediately.

If you explore digital radiography with flexible wireless sensors, I'm confident that you too will soon be wondering how you ever got along without it.