Elevating Biofilm Management in Daily Hygiene Care

The PWR Air air polishing device from HuFriedyGroup enhances efficiency and patient comfort.

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TAMI WANLESS MED, RDH

Tami Wanless MEd, RDH, has built a career defined by clinical excellence, education, and a deep commitment to advancing the standard of care in dental hygiene. With more than three decades of experience in clinical practice, along with a master's degree in adult education and years spent teaching at leading dental hygiene programs, Wanless has dedicated her professional life not only to treating patients, but also to helping fellow clinicians refine their skills and embrace evolving technologies. Her work in private practice in the Chicagoland area, combined with her global outreach through dental missions, reflects a consistent focus: delivering better outcomes through thoughtful, evidence-based care.

That same philosophy drives Wanless's approach to innovation in the operatory. As a longtime educator and clinician, she has seen firsthand how traditional methods can persist long after better options become available. Her adoption of the PWR Air air polishing device, available from HuFriedyGroup, represents what she describes as a meaningful shift—not simply in technique, but in mindset. "Air polishing isn't just a new technique," she explains. "It's the shift now on how we think about biofilm and managing patient care."

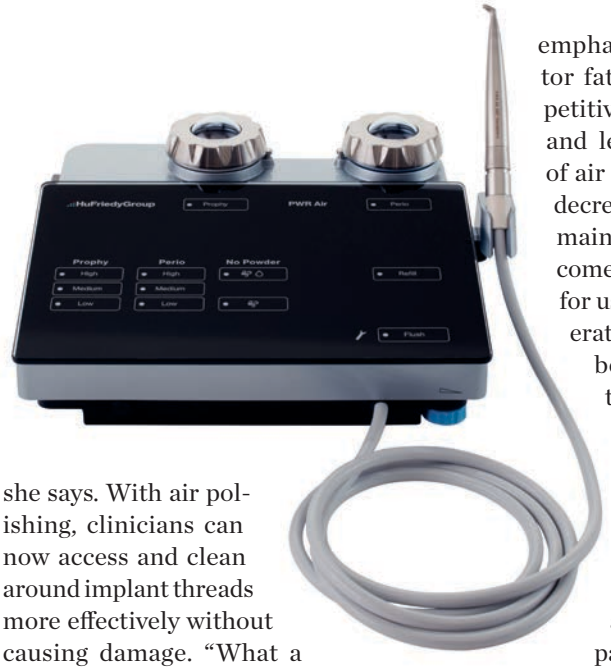
For Wanless, the distinction between traditional polishing and modern air polishing is fundamental. Historically, polishing has been centered on stain removal, often using prophy cups and paste. While effective to a degree, that approach does not fully address the underlying cause of many oral diseases. "What I'd love to challenge everyone to do is think about air polishing as a biofilm management mindset, not just stain removal," she says. By focusing on biofilm disruption—particularly within the gingival sulcus—clinicians can more directly target the root causes of caries and periodontal disease.

This evolution in thinking is supported by advances in both equipment and powder technology. Wanless notes that earlier air polishing systems were often messy, uncomfortable, and potentially damaging to soft tissues and restorative materials. Today's systems, however, are designed with significantly smaller powder particles and more precise delivery mechanisms. These improvements allow clinicians to safely and effectively work both supra- and subgingivally, opening new possibilities for comprehensive biofilm control.

In her own practice, Wanless has fully embraced this approach. "I haven't picked up a prophy cup in more than eight years," she says. Instead, she begins appointments by disclosing biofilm, then using air polishing to remove it before addressing any remaining hard deposits. This "disclose, polish, then focus on the hard deposits" workflow has transformed her efficiency and clinical outcomes. "After a while, I was left wondering, what am I instrumenting? There's no biofilm left," she explains. "The only thing I need my instruments for is hard deposits—calculus."

The benefits extend beyond efficiency. Wanless reports that patients quickly notice the difference in comfort and results. The finer powders used with modern systems, such as glycine and erythritol, are significantly less abrasive than traditional sodium bicarbonate and are better tolerated by both hard and soft tissues. "The grain size relates to comfort," she says, noting that patients often remark positively on the taste and overall experience. In contrast to older systems, which were frequently described as gritty and unpleasant, today's air polishing is gentle enough for use across a wide range of clinical scenarios, including implants, orthodontics, and pediatric care.

Implant maintenance, in particular, stands out as a major advantage. Wanless recalls the limitations of previous approaches, which relied on plastic instruments that were often ineffective at thoroughly removing biofilm from implant surfaces. "We did the best with what we had, but deep in our hearts we all knew it wasn't really that effective,"



she says. With air polishing, clinicians can now access and clean around implant threads more effectively without causing damage. "What a game changer now air polishing is," she adds.

The PWR Air device supports this level of care by combining air, water, and specialized powders to disrupt biofilm and remove stains efficiently. Its ability to deliver consistent, controlled airflow helps clinicians maintain a continuous workflow, while features such as adjustable power modes and dedicated perio functions allow for customization based on patient needs. Wanless also highlights the device's ergonomic and practical design, including handpieces that can be autoclaved repeatedly without degradation. "What I love about these units is I can autoclave them over and over, and I'm not going to have any issues," she says.

In addition to the standalone PWR Air system, Wanless has experience with the PWR Pair piezoelectric scaling and air polishing device, which integrates air polishing with piezoelectric scaling technology. This all-in-one configuration allows clinicians to perform both biofilm disruption and calculus removal within a single platform, offering flexibility for practices seeking a more comprehensive solution. While her primary focus remains on air polishing, she notes that the integration of technologies can further streamline workflows and enhance clinical efficiency.

Another key advantage Wanless emphasizes is reduced operator fatigue. By minimizing repetitive hand instrumentation and leveraging the efficiency of air polishing, clinicians can decrease physical strain while maintaining high-quality outcomes. "It's actually healthier for us because we have less operator fatigue," she says. This benefit, combined with time savings during appointments, creates opportunities to enhance patient education and communication. Wanless frequently uses disclosing agents as a visual tool, helping patients better understand the presence and impact of biofilm. "This is a patient education tool," she explains, noting that patients often become more engaged and motivated when they can see the results firsthand.

Wanless also appreciates the role of HuFriedyGroup as a partner in this process. "HuFriedyGroup has done a great job," she says, pointing to the company's emphasis on thoughtful design, clinical efficiency, and ongoing support. From in-office training opportunities to product development, she views the company as aligned with her commitment to advancing clinical practice. "They really support clinicians," she adds, emphasizing the importance of education and hands-on experience when adopting new technologies.

Ultimately, Wanless sees air polishing—and the PWR Air system specifically—as part of a broader movement toward raising the standard of care. By prioritizing biofilm management, clinicians can deliver more effective, comfortable, and meaningful treatment. "This isn't about replacing one technique with another," she says. "It's about raising the standard of care."

Her experience in practice reinforces that perspective. Within months of implementing air polishing, Wanless observed measurable improvements in patient health, along with increased satisfaction among both patients and team members. "My patients got so much healthier," she says. "They noticed it, and I noticed it."

As dentistry continues to evolve, Wanless believes that embracing evidence-based innovations is essential. The shift toward biofilm-focused care represents not just a technological advancement, but a redefinition of what effective hygiene therapy looks like. For Wanless, the PWR Air system embodies that shift—delivering healthier outcomes, greater efficiency, and a better overall experience for both patients and clinicians.

In the end, her message is straightforward. When clinicians have the tools to provide care that is more comfortable, more efficient, and more effective, the impact is felt across every aspect of the practice. With PWR Air, Wanless has found a solution that aligns with her philosophy and enhances her ability to deliver on her commitment to excellence. The result is a practice environment where patients are healthier, clinicians are more efficient, and the standard of care continues to rise.

Key Points

- **The PWR Air air polishing device delivers effective supragingival and subgingival biofilm disruption, stain removal, and implant cleaning in a single standalone system.**
- **Three adjustable power modes allow clinicians to tailor treatment intensity for comfort, sensitivity, and deposit type.**
- **Slim stainless steel handpieces and a continuous airflow system support durability, efficiency, and reduced clogging during procedures.**
- **The device enables seamless switching between supragingival and subgingival applications, optimizing workflow and clinical versatility.**