There has been a major movement in dentistry to preserve as much tooth structure as possible, and tooth alignment has become the cosmetic treatment of choice. Short-term orthodontics (STO) for general dentists is a cosmetic solution for adult patients and is a great service we can add to our practices. It is easy, effective and patients want it.

As with any treatment, case selection is paramount in deciding whom to treat. It is a useful alternative to traditional treatment options such as crowns and veneers, and it is not only less destructive but is also more cost-effective, meaning more patients can access this treatment and can achieve fantastic smiles in the space of only six months.

Case presentation

The patient came to us interested in veneers. After an initial consultation, it soon became apparent that placing veneers would have been a very destructive option, as a lot of preparation would have been needed to achieve an ideal cosmetic result.

After we explained the various pros and cons of veneers, the patient asked if there were any other options. Naturally, we then explained that one option is comprehensive orthodontics that would involve 12 to 18 months. We also described a more cosmetically focused approach, in the form of Six Month Smiles, that would straighten her teeth in about six months.

Having discussed the various merits and drawbacks of each option, the patient opted for Six Month Smiles, because the relatively short treatment time was appealing to her and she only wanted a cosmetic fix, not a functional correction that comprehensive orthodontics would have provided.

This case is an excellent example of the "ideal case" for GP short-term orthodontics. The patient’s molar and canine relationships were Class 1 on both sides with a normal tooth width ratio, upper-to-lower. We weren’t planning any anterior-posterior relationship changes, so this case was perfectly suited for a GP to complete.

At the end of treatment, the patient was absolutely delighted with the results and has, in fact, become a great advocate for our practice. She’s even recommended a number of her friends to come and see us as a result of the treatment, and it’s extremely satisfying to see how much difference this simple, yet effective short-term orthodontic system can have.