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DENTAL TECHNOLOGY

DENTAL LASERS like the Waterlase MD are now available and use the application of light and water to remove the diseased or damaged tooth, gum or bone, molecule by molecule. Laser technology is associated with far less pain and often requires no peri-operative anesthesia.

21st Century Dentistry

3D technology used to fabricate restorations in the dental office and laboratory with CAD/CAM

Technology's impact on our world is astounding. We on the Space Coast are fortunate to see it all the time with shuttle launches and advanced weather forecasting. Computers and digital imaging are an everyday part of our lives. Medicine and dentistry have benefited and kept up with technology. We hear terms such as CAT scans and MRI imaging and we don't need an explanation.

Digital Imaging Eliminates Toxic Chemicals

Advanced technology now extends to the dental chair. The patient can now, often for the first time, see and understand their condition on a computer screen due to advances in intraoral videography. The intraoral video camera affords a real time live tour of the patient's mouth with the capability of producing photos focused on the significant tooth/gum pathology or deformity. The adage of a picture is worth a thousand words has never been more true. Digital photography aids in treatment planning, and digital imaging helps the patient to visualize the possibilities of a cosmetic change or smile design.

Digital imaging is changing the way we see things. Digital dental X-rays use sensors instead of film. There are no toxic chemicals and the image is available in seconds. Radiation is reduced 75 percent or more and there are many digital tools to enhance the image. Patients appreciate seeing and understand-

ing their diagnosis. Radiograph advances such as 3D imaging give the dentist a more accurate look at the teeth, bone, sinuses and TMJ (temporomandibular joint). This helps to diagnose problems and formulate solutions. These X-rays

are similar to advanced CAT scans but use significantly less radiation, and provide an advanced level of diagnostic capability. 3D technology is also being used to fabricate restorations in the dental office and laboratory using CAD/CAM (computer aided design-computer aided machining) technology. Implant surgeries can be preplanned and the prosthesis made ready at the same time. Currently, a patient without any teeth can have "guided" implants and a fixed bridge placed using CAD/CAM technology all in one hour, and then go out to dinner later that evening.

Traditionally dental visualization has been limited by the individual dentist's own vision. Later, surgical telescopic loops were used to get a better look in our mouths. Technologically advanced dentists are now using surgical microscopes to more accurately magnify and bring images into focus. The results are incredible, and the benefit to the patient is high quality work. The



photos and videos are remarkable. Patients can actually observe their own treatment live.

Dreaded 'Pick'

Most all of us are familiar with the dreaded dental pick that would prod and poke all around our teeth. When it stuck, we knew we were in trouble. Advanced dentists use lasers such as the Diagnodent — an instrument from Germany, which shines through the enamel of the tooth and measures density. It finds decay before the pick and before it is visible to the human eye. Decay can then be removed by microdentistry and future serious problems avoided.

Traditionally a trip to the dentist for management of a problem often engendered consternation associated with the "drill." There is hardly a person over 25 who doesn't have some trauma registered in their brain surrounding the dental drill. Dental lasers like the Waterlase MD, are now available that use the

application of light and water to remove the diseased or damaged tooth, gum or bone, molecule by molecule. Laser technology is associated with far less pain and often requires no preoperative anesthesia.

In the past, if decay in the tooth or gum disease was not caught early, pulling the tooth or (teeth) was the only option. Dental extraction like this often started a chain of events leading to dentures. These days it's easier and less traumatic than ever to ward off dental disease.

However, if it is absolutely necessary to have a tooth pulled, dental implants are available that are placed into the bone in the area of the previous root. A crown is attached to the implant, the space is filled and the bite restored. If you are already wearing dentures, the fit can be improved tremendously by the placement of dental implants that will snap the denture into place.

If for whatever reason you need dental surgery or have pain or inflammation, the low-level laser is available to enhance the healing potential of cells and tissues. In the not too distant future, genetic engineering will help in the areas of periodontal disease and decay.

Dr. Edwards graduated from the United States Merchant Marine Academy and Temple University School of Dentistry. He completed a general practice residency at the Queens Medical Center in Honolulu. To reach Dr. Edwards you may call 321-751-7775 or visit www.smiledesigncenter.us

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