

Laser treatment means the future is now in periodontics 13

WOODCLIFF LAKE

Within the past year, Dr. Eric Linden, a Periodontist located at 595 Chestnut Ridge Road in Woodcliff Lake, has taken the initiative to provide his patients with the latest technological advance for gum disease treatment - LANAP (Laser Assisted New Attachment Procedure), a laser which offers patients a less invasive and less painful treatment option than the traditional gum disease surgery.

LANAP, which was developed by Millennium Dental Technologies, is the only FDA-approved, laser-based treatment for gum disease. Dr. Linden has been practicing Periodontics, including the placement of dental

implants, in Woodcliff Lake since 1986. Dr. Linden is one of the first and only practicing Periodontists on the east coast to be certified to use LANAP.

According to the American Dental Association and the American Academy of Periodontology, gum disease, otherwise known as periodontal disease, is a bacterial infection below the gum line of the tissues that support teeth. Gum disease is classified according to the severity of the disease. The two major stages are gingivitis and periodontitis. Gingivitis is a milder and usually reversible form of gum disease, but if left untreated may lead to more serious, destructive periodontitis.

Gum disease is often pain-

less and can go undetected or ignored until it has reached severe stages. Some warning signs are gums that bleed easily; red, swollen or tender gums; gums that are separated from the teeth; persistent bad breath or a bad taste in the mouth; loosening or separating permanent teeth; and a change in the way teeth fit together when one bites.

"Anyone can get gum disease," Dr. Linden says. "About 75 percent of the adult population has some form of it."

According to Dr. Linden, more than half of the people that need treatment for gum disease never get it.

"Less common, we also see it in children," Dr. Linden explains. "Many cases are either

not diagnosed or left untreated." Dental X-rays and a clinical exam with a Periodontist or a general dentist will easily diagnose the disease.

Common factors that increase the risk of developing gum disease include smoking or chewing tobacco, diabetes, certain types of medications such as steroids, some types of anti-epilepsy drugs, cancer therapy drugs, some calcium channel blockers and oral contraceptives, crooked teeth, fillings that have become defective, and pregnancy.

If left untreated, gum disease can lead to tooth loss, as well as some even worse consequences. According to Dr. Linden, untreated gum disease has been associated with other serious health problems including heart disease, hardening of the arteries, stroke, diabetes, and pre-term births. Cardiologists believe that the inflammation from periodontal disease may contribute to coronary artery disease. Recent studies have indicated a strong association between the bacteria present in gum disease and the bacteria present in the coronary arteries in heart disease.

Prior to the emergence of LANAP, Dr. Linden treated patients who had a moderate to advanced form of gum disease with a surgical procedure utilizing the traditional technique - a scalpel and stitches. Laser treatment does not require any scalpel, cutting or stitching.

"An analogy would be Lasik for the eyes," explains Dr. Linden. Lasik is a surgical procedure using a non-invasive laser beam, which reduces a person's dependency on glasses or contact lenses.

Dr. Linden still offers

patients the option of traditional surgery, but most opt for LANAP after learning of its benefits.

"So far we've treated a substantial number of patients with great success," says Dr. Linden. "Patients whom I have been seeing for many years, that have had traditional surgery versus the laser surgery, describe it as a 'night and day difference' in terms of experience, recovery and comfort."

Another benefit of the laser is that patients that are on medications such as blood thinners and heart medications do not have to be taken off of those medications prior to laser surgery. That is not the case for traditional surgery.

"There are no contraindications to using the laser on most patients, even those with pacemakers and implantable devices. Patients can go back to work the same day as their laser treatment. They will probably leave the office with a slightly numb mouth, but they can comfortably function in the work environment," Dr. Linden assures.

According to Dr. Linden, LANAP kills specific bacteria that are at the root of gum disease, while leaving healthy tissue untouched.

"It's very specific for the bacteria that causes gum disease and the diseased tissue only. Patients will come in and say, 'Oh, a laser!' and they think of 'Star Wars.' I reassure them that it is very safe, very controlled - it does just what we need it to do."

To find out more about gum disease and LANAP, or to set up an appointment to see if you qualify for LANAP treatment, call Dr. Eric Linden's office at (201) 307-0339 or check his Web site at www.drgums.com.

February 25, 2008 • Pascack Press



PHOTO BY LAURIE KAPLAN

■ Periodontist Dr. Eric Linden shows off the new device in his office which affords laser treatment of gum disease.

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