

Oral Health



One extraordinary surgical team used new technology to give injured veteran **Sgt. Lee McNeill** his long-awaited smile back.

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New Tech & a Charitable Doctor Gave One Vet a Reason to Smile

After Sgt. Lee McNeill sustained a facial injury while serving overseas, he had a hard time finding an oral surgeon who could help him — until he met Dr. Kevin Neshat.

In 2004, while serving overseas, Sgt. Lee McNeill suffered a major facial injury that directly impacted his mouth, fracturing his gum lines. “It was like getting hit in the face with a sledgehammer,” he says. McNeill spent years trying to get help from Veteran Affairs before he met Dr. Kevin Neshat, Board Certified Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon of Nu Image Surgical & Dental Implant Center in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Dr. Neshat and his team provide

a number of procedures free of charge to those in particular need. The implants for McNeill were a no-brainer. “We are very blessed with what we do, and we feel like it’s the least we can do,” says Neshat. “We do at least two cases a month and several larger cases a year that fall into the category of charitable work, so we do a lot of this kind of work.” The team has a special committee that reviews applications and when they received McNeill’s case, the team was in agreement. “This guy gets it.”

The benefits of innovation
After describing the case to the dental implant company, Noble Biocare, they decided to cover the expenses of the implants for McNeill. Because McNeill experienced trauma that could affect his nerves, Nu Image used a new technology called X-NAV, making them the first in the Carolinas to use it. With this technology, surgeons can plan the entire procedure on the computer and then perform live 3D navigation and surgery. Unlike more typical static guides, X-NAV creates 360-degree

single-view of drill position and anatomy during surgery and can be adjusted if needed. “It’s dynamic, it can be ever-changing, and the accuracy is unbelievable,” says Neshat, who hopes to use the system for different bones in the face as the company expands the technology. Neshat hopes that as use of the technology increases, prices will decrease for both patients and oral practitioners. “If this becomes a routine practice, everyone is safer and better for it,” he says. “I think that this is the way of the future.”

Giving back
Neshat emphasizes that medical professionals can make a huge difference by providing care for veterans, who often have struggle getting the care they need. After the procedure, McNeill felt proud of his smile for the first time in thirteen years. “Every time [McNeill] came in he would cry. He would cry and I would cry,” recalls Neshat. “These people really deserve it; they are giving it their all.” ■

By Zoe Alexander

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¹ Ormianer Z, Piek D, Livne S, Lavi D, Zafrir G, Palti A, Harel N. Retrospective Clinical Evaluation of Tapered Implants: 10-year Follow-up of Delayed and Immediate Placement of Maxillary Implants. *Implant Dentistry* 2012;21(4):350-356

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How We Can Get More Americans in the Dentist's Chair

Beth Truett, the president and CEO of Oral Health America (OHA), wants you to make your mouth a priority. But she knows that's not always an easy ask.

Truett sees three distinct factors that keep people out of the dentist's chair: lack of knowledge, lack of time and lack of funds.

Understanding the risks

Gum disease is now believed to

be not only an indicator of but a potential catalyst for diabetes. Inflammation in the gums can also travel through the body to the brain or, more commonly, the heart, leading to a heart attack. In the past decade, Truett notes, "knowledge has improved and awareness

has grown, but there's still a huge divide, especially among the 20 percent of people who bear 80 percent of the disease."

But the dangers of ignoring dental health are manifold. From a social perspective, missing teeth, bad breath or an inability to

enunciate properly can negatively impact employment opportunities, school performance and overall self-esteem. Poor oral health can also impact aspects of daily living, such as blocking the ability to chew and eat nutritious foods, for high-need populations including young children and the elderly.

Making the time

When moms are surveyed about dental health, their reaction is overwhelmingly: "time is not my friend." Dental health is seen as a luxury, not a necessity.

"If it's not in your DNA or your habits or you don't have the money to go regularly, then you may wait until you're in pain," Truett explains. But, "by the time you're in pain, disease is already present. That complicates the job for the hygienist, who is now dealing with something more complex that could have been averted." Truett believes that if we can spread awareness of this reality as well as the other risks, more Americans will be proactive about dentist visits.

Increasing access

Truett also notes that every age group needs tailored attention when it comes to breaking down barriers to dental care access. Schools, she suggests, are "an excellent place in which to offer oral health services." Besides reducing cost, in-school service means "parents don't have to take out of work... and kids are simply called when the appointment is ready, so there are fewer missed appointments."

For older Americans, Truett continues, "if they want to enjoy eating, smiling, kissing their grandchildren into old age, the time has come for an oral health benefit in Medicare."

Truett is hopeful about better oral health for all, but acknowledges that to spread brighter smiles, all Americans need to join the fight. "[OHA] wants to step in and invigorate communities to take a role. I don't think there's any organization that can do what communities won't do." ■

By Emily Gawlak



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Improved dental implant technology is making it easier for dentists and patients to replace missing teeth. Nowadays surgeries are minimally invasive and produce accurate results with faster patient recovery times.

“Dental implants are a long-lasting and effective replacement for teeth,” says oral and maxillo-facial surgeon, Robert W. Emery, DDS. “Implants benefit overall oral health and look, feel and function just like natural teeth.”

Technology advances

Patients want dental implant surgery to be as smooth as possible. Dentists focus on precision since poorly placed implants can come loose, be painful and visually unappealing. New dental technology means dentists can accurately insert dental implants in a minimally invasive, same-day guided

New Dental Implant Technology So Accurate, It's Like GPS for the Dental Drill

surgery. Using patent-pending navigation technology, X-Nav Technologies developed their X-Guide Dynamic 3D Navigation system for more accurate surgical navigation during dental implant procedures.

The system integrates Cone Beam 3D imaging into a dentist's practice, enhancing precision and control during surgeries. The X-Guide system offers dentists interactive, turn-by-turn guidance,

which is like GPS for the dentist's drill. Dentists can look at the computer screen to focus precisely during the dental implant surgery. The system also helps dentists visualize the placement of the implants.

“When the dentist uses technology like a dental navigation system, the implant can be placed exactly where the dental surgeon wants it,” says Dr. Emery, who is also the chief medical officer for X-Nav Technologies. “For the patient, this means a minimally invasive procedure that can offer less postoperative pain, fewer complications, faster recovery and ideal functional and cosmetic results.”

Best results

Dr. Emery advises patients considering dental implants to ask their dentist if they use a dental navigation system. “You should choose a dentist that has completed training in dental implant surgery and has made the investment in utilizing technology to provide the best results for their patients,” he says, noting, “accuracy and precision of where that implant is placed during surgery is critical to its success.” ■

By Kristen Castillo

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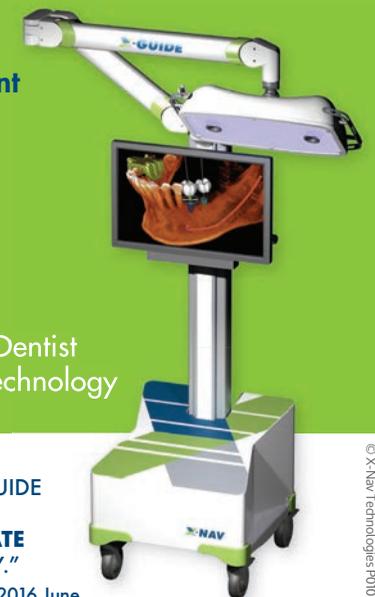
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ASK YOUR DENTIST ABOUT

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i Dental Implants: New Technologies Aid in Precision Surgery, Patient Recovery

Already more comfortable and longer lasting than dentures and bridges as a solution for missing teeth, many people are benefiting from dental implants due to a variety of recent technological advancements.

For 40 years, dental implants imbedded in the jawbone have been a long-term solution for missing teeth, and many patients have benefited from these procedures. With the advent of advanced digital imaging combined with computerized navigation, oral and maxillofacial surgeons (OMSS) may be able to help those who before might not have been candidates for implants.

Previously, OMSS had to be able to see the bone, nerves and tissues involved to place the implant. Now, OMSS can perform the surgery using X-rays and computer navigation, similar to GPS in cars. Using the new technology, patients often have minimized swelling, are able to control pain with over-the-counter medicines such as ibuprofen and acetaminophen (instead of narcotic pain prescriptions) and may miss only one day of work. OMSS can sometimes replace a full set of teeth during one procedure.

The actual implants also have undergone improvements. Their surfaces bond with the jaws better, are more resilient and their parts fit more precisely. Implants of various sizes are available. For a patient with severe bone loss, a short or narrow implant can be used to avoid grafting to replace missing bone. That can improve the patient experience because he or she can avoid a more extensive procedure.

In some cases, bone used to be removed from elsewhere in the patient's body and grafted onto the jaw. Now OMSS can use biomaterials – synthetic materials developed to be placed in living tissue – for replacing bone or soft tissue. Using these materials can lead to less invasive, more predictable treatments. In addition, growth factors and products derived from blood – such as platelet-rich plasma – are used to boost healing.

Benefits of implants

Dental implants are often the best treatment option for replacing missing teeth because they can last a lifetime, stay in place, look and feel like natural teeth and allow patients to enjoy a healthy, diverse diet. Dentures may move, make noise and result in bone loss. Fixed bridges require adjacent teeth to be reduced to accept crowns (frequently those teeth are normal and healthy).

In addition, both fixed bridges and dentures typically need to be replaced every seven to 15 years. Dental implants do not slip, make noise or decay, and, because they fuse with the jawbone, bone loss is usually not an issue.

OMSS are well-trained to perform all grafting, soft-tissue procedures and surgery to place dental implants. Consider these doctors if you are looking for a solution to missing teeth.

By Brett L. Ferguson, D.D.S., F.A.C.S., President, American Association of Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeons

Oral Health Is About More than Just Your Mouth

Dental visits are about more than catching cavities and cleaning teeth. Dentists also check your mouth for signs of other diseases.

Dentists are doctors of oral health and because of their education and training, may see clues in a patient's mouth that could suggest other diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular disease and nutritional deficiencies. Regular dental visits, plus regular appointments with a primary physician, can help ensure these conditions are caught and treated early.

For example, at your next dental exam, your dentist may take a moment to feel the sides

of your face, your jaw and your neck. This is an exam for oropharyngeal cancer, a type of cancer that occurs at the back of the mouth or top of the throat.

A close call

Sandy Wexler, a registered nurse from Houston, Texas, learned firsthand how important this exam can be. In July 2012, her dentist found an enlarged lymph node during her regular appointment. She sent Sandy to her physician. She was diagnosed with oropharyngeal cancer caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV).

"I credit [my dentist] with saving my life," she said. "Otherwise, it could have been six more months before this could have been diagnosed and found."

Sandy has been cancer-free for five years since completing treatment at the University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center.

A disease on the rise

Sandy's story has a happy ending, yet oropharyngeal cancer is on the rise. The American Cancer Society estimates 50,000 cases will be diagnosed this year.

That is why dentists are focused on prevention. Don't be surprised if your dentist asks if you've received the HPV vaccine. While most people associate HPV with cervical cancer, the back of the mouth and top of the throat are the most common sites for HPV-related cancers. HPV vaccines protect against two common strains that are responsible for an estimated 60 percent of oropharyngeal cancer diagnosis. Sandy is also now a vocal proponent of HPV vaccination.

And if you use tobacco, talk to your dentist. It's another serious risk factor for oropharyngeal cancer. In terms of your oral health and overall health, it's never too late to stop using tobacco. ■

By Marcelo W. Araujo, D.D.S., VP Science Institute, American Dental Association

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