UT DENTISTRY
HEALTH SCIENCE CENTER SAN ANTONIO

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For immediate release

UT Dentistry first U.S practice to offer new FDA-approved ceramic implants

UT Health Science Center dental student places initial implant

SAN ANTONIO (Feb. 9, 2016) — Patients who need dental implants but have thin gums or are allergic to titanium may benefit from a new, stronger ceramic dental implant just approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The new implant is available through UT Dentistry, the clinical practice of the School of Dentistry at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio.

Already used for some time in Europe, the implant was approved by the FDA on Jan. 11 for use in the United States. On Jan. 25, fourth-year dental student Brenna Sura placed the implant using state-of-the-art technology, under the supervision of Stefanie Seitz, D.D.S., assistant professor of comprehensive dentistry.

“I think it’s amazing that we are exposed to the latest technology and are actually given the opportunity to place the newest kind of implants while we are still in school. A lot of dental schools don’t even have a dental implant elective, and the fact that we are able to place a ceramic implant is really exciting,” she said

Dr. Seitz said that while there have been other ceramic dental implants in the past, these did not always hold up to the bite pressure needed for normal use. The new ceramic implants have shown comparable strength to titanium, the standard material used for dental implants.

“This is somewhat of a niche product for patients who have special circumstances,” Dr. Seitz said. “By their nature, titanium implants can compromise esthetics by showing gray through the gum tissue. This ceramic implant is ivory in color, thereby mimicking the natural color of teeth, making it more esthetic. The ceramic implants are also helpful for patients who are allergic to titanium or, for whatever reason, do not want to have metal in their bodies,” she said.

The ceramic implant is placed with a protective cap to allow for the three- to four-month healing phase before the tooth can be used for chewing. Although the ceramic implant is available to all implant patients, the cost is higher than titanium implants, Dr. Seitz said.

State-of-the-art technology

Dr. Seitz and Richard Zimmermann, D.D.S., assistant professor of comprehensive dentistry at the Health Science Center, are consultants to the manufacturer, Straumann USA LLC, to employ the latest imaging technology to plan and place both ceramic and titanium implants. The technology results in precise placement, less pain for the patient and faster healing.

“Using this technology, we do not have to cut open the gum to place the implant. We drill to the precise depth and disturb less gum tissue and bone,” Dr. Seitz said.

The technology calls for dentists to perform a digital scan of the teeth instead of using a thick, pasty dental material to get an impression of the mouth. The digital data are put into a 3-D implant planning software program to determine the exact location, appropriate depth and angle for the implant. The program provides coordinates for the manufacturer to make a 3-D resin “guide,” or template, to place the implant. The guide looks similar to the plastic trays used to straighten teeth in orthodontics. A hole in the template for the implant guides the dental surgeon for exact placement.

Ceramic implants can be used for single implants or groups of teeth, Dr. Seitz said.

For more information about the ceramic implants, please call the UT Dentistry Implant Clinic at **(210) 450-3700**.

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