

Brother team take on tooth decay

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brother develop the laser technique for dentistry.

THE BROTHERS, with the help of a company in Scotland, are working on a prototype for a portable dental laser unit. They recently received a patent for both the dental unit and the procedure.

Until the Scottish company completes the prototype in two years, the brothers must continue use a laser developed to treat cataracts. Terry's 10 willing patients — who have signed legal release forms — have undergone the laser work in William's office.

In fact, the idea to try the YAG laser on teeth came out of William's research and subsequent patent for a lens implant.

"As we did that, we decided to apply the same procedure to the dental field," William said. Whether on a cataract or on a decayed tooth, the laser turns the damaged tissue into a gas, the ophthalmologist said.

A DENTIST using a drill must remove some of the sound tooth with the decayed material, Terry said. But a laser removes only the decay.

"It only removes the softened portion — the diseased portion of the tooth," Terry said. "It (the laser) doesn't have the ability to affect the enamel."

Unlike the drill method, the laser procedure requires "no unusual preparation."

Perhaps the best part of this still-experimental procedure is that it is pain-

less, said Pamela Arndt, a patient who has had the procedure performed. It's painless because of the speed of the laser, Terry said.

"YOU'LL HEAR a kind of zap, zap, zap," Terry told Arndt as he stood at her side holding her mouth open so William could focus in on the small cavity on one of her lower front teeth.

Through the sighting device, the cavity appears as a darkened area on the tooth.

The YAG unit, William said, has two beams. The red beam is used to zero in on the cavity. Once William, who peers into a magnifier, has the cavity on target, he zaps the tooth with a different beam 50 microns in diameter — about the width of a human hair.

"You can hear a spark," Terry told Arndt. "That's the actual vaporization of the area."

"ALL WE are concerned with is removing the diseased portion of the tooth," Terry said.

William continues with the laser until he sees the damaged tooth material disappear.

Although an indentation remains, Terry has not filled the small holes as he would when using a drill. Part of the reason is that the indentation is not big enough to hold a filling. The other reason is that, according to other professional research, enamel exposed to the laser "appears stronger than before," Terry said.

"This is not our research. But other research indicates this to be true," Terry said.

Research shows teeth exposed to a laser beam appear to become resistant to the acids that cause tooth decay, said Kathy Pencas, a spokeswoman for the American Dental Association in Chicago.

UNSURE, HOWEVER, whether stronger enamel is a permanent result of exposure to the laser, Terry has been keeping tabs on patients who have undergone the experimental process.

If the dentist is not quite on target with the laser, Terry said, the chances of injury are not as great as if the dentist slipped while using a drill.

"It does not do anything to hard, sound enamel," Terry said.

If the laser beam focuses a patient's lip, for example, there probably would be a small laceration. But he said it would be almost invisible.

Because the laser method of removing cavities seems simple and obvious, many people ask why it hasn't been used before, Terry said.

The answer is that lasers have been used and are being used in oral surgery.

Land is sold to district

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area. It's a narrow strip of land and can't really be used for anything... nothing that would complement what we have, anyway."

BY GIVING the land to the school district, the residents hope to keep their woods and gain a tax benefit.

"We'll all take a deduction," Gliza said. "It'll be just like giving to a church."

Lewis Schulman, superintendent of the Farmington Schools, was pleased to accept the land.

"It's a beautiful piece of property," he said. "It's logical extension of our land. Our owning it will prevent encroachment by homes or whatever. We always have nature programs and this land would be the logical place to have them."

The property is "fairly valuable," according to Gliza, who declined to give it a dollar value.

Cloverdale is a Farmington School District facility for severely mentally retarded children.

Letters to express the board's appreciation for the gifts will be written to the donors, a spokesman said.

Orbit

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But being a science teacher and having a science background won't help in the race for that coveted position.

"The main thing they're looking for is someone who can communicate," McAdaragh said. "They're making a very big point that it doesn't have to be a person with a background in science or math."

"One of the requirements is that you have to develop a project on the shuttle. I'm still working on it. They emphasize that it doesn't have to be a scientific experiment." Added Ports, "My chances are as good as anyone else's. And, even if I don't make it, it'll be a good experience filling out the application and getting the recommendations."

McAdaragh, who is single, lives in Livonia. Ports, married and the mother of two, is a Farmington Hills resident. Earthly obligations could be "a real consideration with that commitment," McAdaragh said.

"They tell you that there'll be a rigorous schedule after the flight," she added. "I heard people at the meeting say, 'Oh, I wonder what my wife and kids would say!'"

Ports, however, has a ready answer for that question.

"My husband supports the idea wholeheartedly," she said. "He's always wanted me to do what's in the best interest of all of us."

More applications may be received from Farmington teachers before the Feb. 1 deadline. Some 500 Michigan teachers are expected to apply.

"I knew the application form would be involved," McAdaragh said. "If for no other reason to make sure the teacher filling it out would be serious about it."

Both McAdaragh and Ports would like whoever does the selecting to know that they're serious about wanting to go.

"It'll make space flight more of a reality," McAdaragh said. "People will see that it's not just the astronauts or jet pilots who can go."



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