

Breaking new ground

Norwalk dentist one of first to implement new laser equipment at his practice.

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Hour Staff Writer

NORWALK — Whether it is working with state-of-the-art equipment or trekking off to Guatemala to share his knowledge and help people, Norwalk dentist Michael Hodish, DMD is not afraid to try something new.

“I like being on the leading edge,” he said. “I get kind of bored doing things everybody else does. I like blazing a trail.”

Hodish has recently started using the Opus Duo — a dental machine in which lasers replace traditional drills, picks and scalpels for some procedures — at his practice, Advanced Dental Group at 454 Main Ave.

Hodish purchased three laser machines, made by Lumenis, after being trained last summer to operate the system.

Hodish also uses the Diagnodent system whereby cavities, if detected early enough, can be fixed painlessly before fillings are needed.

“No drill, no silver,” Hodish said.

Lasers scan the teeth for early cavities and sound an alarm when one is found. It can then be fixed using a painless procedure called Air Abrasion.

The lasers can also remove tongue and mouth lesions painlessly and easily, thereby eliminating the risk of the lesion becoming cancerous.

“It used to be a horrible surgery,” he

said. “The surgery was worse than the disease.”

The soft-tissue laser can also fix problems with the lingual frenum — found beneath the tongue — which can cause speech difficulties.

The hard-tissue laser makes removing old fillings easier and less painful, and minimizes the damage to the tooth.

“The laser can be focused down to a pinpoint,” he said. “Smaller than the smallest scalpel.”

While the lasers are helpful with many procedures, he does not expect a laser dentistry revolution anytime soon.

“It’s a part of the future of dentistry. It doesn’t completely replace all of the old tools,” Hodish said. “The biggest drawback is that it’s slow.”

“But in the next 10 years, more practices will look like mine,” he added. “It’s better service for the customer. It’s pretty amazing stuff.”

He also has a laser to kill bacteria in gum tissue to treat gum disease.

Hodish, who now operates the practice started by his father more than 50 years ago, will soon start teaching laser dentistry.

He is already a certified trainer of Cerec dentistry, which uses a computerized system to construct porcelain crowns and other dental restorations. Also, according to Hodish, Cerec (CERamic rEConstruction) dentistry is beneficial because the restorations are tooth colored, metal free and preserve more of the natural tooth.



Hour photo/ERIK TRAUTMANN

Norwalk dentist Michael Hodish stands by his Opus Duo laser, which makes trips to the dentist painless for many procedures.

Hodish currently uses a CEREC3 at his practice for crowns, laminates, inlays and onlays. Instead of using impressions, pictures are taken with a digital camera and the restoration is designed in 3D with a computer. A

milling machine makes the restoration out of strong ceramic on the spot. The entire process takes about two hours, instead of requiring multiple visits and weeks of waiting for the impressions to return from a lab.

Hodish calls Cerec, “The most revolutionary technology I have ever seen in this profession.”

It was teaching Cerec that brought Hodish to Guatemala. The clinic Proyecto Salud Y Paz in Quetzaltenango received two CEREC2 machines by donation and Hodish went there to train the local doctors.

Hodish did the training on a voluntary basis, even though the founder of the clinic wanted to pay him for his services.

“I had always wanted to do some sort of service work in the developing world,” Hodish said.

Hodish said most of the youths in Guatemala are uneducated and many of them are in poor health and malnourished.

“Efforts are being made to not only treat people for medical and dental needs, but also to teach basic health prevention knowledge,” Hodish said. “I felt more useful there than I ever have as a dentist. Even though they have had little contact with white-coated health professionals, they respect us, trust us and appreciate that we are there.”

Advanced Dental Group may be reached at (203) 849-1776.

On the Web:

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