

Life-changing dentistry

By Lisa Maria Samaha, DDS, FAGD, PC

Our 58-year-old patient had a lifetime of periodontal disease and rampant decay. As a young woman, Donna's dental disease was diagnosed and treatment was recommended. Having had a series of traumatic childhood dental experiences, she was deathly afraid to proceed with recommendations.

By the time we met Donna, this well-educated, pleasant woman had not received dental care in nearly 30 years. During that time, Donna suffered a great deal of pain and embarrassment, and many of her teeth had fallen out on their own. Her life had been severely impacted by her dental disease.

Motivated for change

Donna had read stories about some of our patients who had similar dental histories. Those stories, along with her only child's upcoming wedding, were the driving forces that gave her the courage to call our office.

Donna wanted to be able to smile



Fig. 1a

proudly at her daughter's wedding and not be an embarrassment to her family.

We had three weeks to eliminate Donna's lifetime of disease and fashion her a new smile. Within a couple of hours of meeting Donna, we reviewed a treatment plan with her. Donna was ready. We made a place for her on our schedule the next day.

The only condition was that Donna would be without teeth dur-



Fig. 1b

Figs. 1a, b: Over the years, Donna had forgotten how to smile. When first prompted to smile, this was the best she could do. (Photos/Provided by Dr. Samaha)

ing her post-op healing period while we prepared her denture. Donna agreed. She was visibly relieved to know that her years of dental suffering would end within 24 hours. The next morning, Donna presented for her full-mouth surgery.

Treatment

Because of severe periodontal infection and rampant decay, full-mouth extractions and replacement with

maxillary and mandibular complete dentures was necessary. Along with extractions, a copious amount of granulation tissue was removed, soft tissue was biopsied and alveoplasty and gingival recontouring were performed.

Bone grafting and guided tissue regeneration were performed for maximum ridge preservation. All treatment was accomplished in one session, with no sedation.

Throughout her postoperative healing, Donna required only two doses of Motrin 800 mg for pain. Complete dentures were delivered one week later.

Summary

Less than three weeks transpired from the day we met this severely phobic patient and the day we delivered her final dentures. Donna was elated with the transformation and responded with tears of joy.

When she greeted her husband in the reception room, they both cried.

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Is sleep dentistry for you?

Sleep dentistry is changing the way patients with sleep disorders are treated. Traditionally, sleep apnea has been the exclusive responsibility of MDs, neurologists or pulmonologists, but dentists are now focusing their energies on how patients who snore can improve their quality of sleep.

When patients are diagnosed as sleep apneic, they are usually placed on a CPAP machine, which involves a mask and breathing tube that they wear while sleeping. Until recently, surgery was one of the few alternatives to CPAP.

Dentists have started treating sleep apneic patients because they understand how occlusion and the position of the jaw can influence a patient's airway. Many dentists offer oral sleep apnea and anti-snoring devices to help patients who don't wish to undergo CPAP treatment or surgery.

"I now always discuss, in my report and with my patients, whether they had loud, steady snoring," said Dr. Lisa Shives, a sleep expert

who authored an article about snoring for CNN Health. "If they did, I recommend treatment, usually with an oral appliance, sometimes with CPAP."

Sleep apnea awareness has grown steadily. SLEEP Journal noted in 2008 that loud snorers are 10 times as likely to have atherosclerosis, which has motivated doctors and dentists to identify treatments.

Even Dr. Mehmet Oz has jumped on the sleep apnea bandwagon. Recently on "The Dr. Oz Show," Oz explained the difference between snoring and obstructive sleep apnea.

According to Oz, the best solutions are to lose weight and then consider surgical solutions. Secondly, Oz mentioned CPAP, and finally, oral appliances to pull the mandible forward.

"I'm seeing a growing demand in my patient base," reports Dr. Mark Weiser, a Santa Barbara dentist and member of the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry who treats sleep apnea and snoring. "But a lot of the appliances I'm making are



(Photo/Provided by the AACD)

for CPAP patients that can't stand their mask and whatnot, so they're going to Google and looking for other options."

"As a dentist, I feel I have an opportunity to 'bridge the gap' so to speak, and help catch more cases of sleep apnea," adds Dr. Don Lowrance, who practices in Corpus Christi, Texas. "They're in my chair, and it doesn't take that much time to ask some simple questions that tell whether or not a sleep study is warranted."

Omaha sleep apnea dentist Dr. Roger Roubal routinely asks his

patients if they snore.

"It's a simple question, but by asking it, we're potentially saving lives in the dental office."

The American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry will offer several lectures on sleep apnea, among many other dental topics, at the annual scientific session in Boston, May 18-21. Drs. Gary Alex, Kent Smith, Beth Thompson and Lee Ann Brady will focus on sleep apnea in their lectures for the individual dentist and dental team. For more information, visit www.aacdconference.com **CI**



Fig. 2a



Fig. 2b

Figs. 2a-c: Donna's best smile the day we meet her.



Fig. 3a



Fig. 2c

Figs. 3a, b: Donna sharing her true smile for the first time in decades.

Patient testimonial

"I was so afraid the day I called to schedule my appointment. I was so fearful, yet I wanted to be presentable for my daughter's wedding. She is the most wonderful daughter a mother could have, I would do anything for her, so I did the hardest thing I had ever done. I read about how you [Dr. Samaha] helped others who were deathly afraid of dental care like me.

"This experience with you and your team has been amazing. I felt so safe within minutes of meeting you and your lovely team. My previous experiences were nothing but fright, doom and gloom, and with each new dentist I felt more and more shame. You and your team are remarkable — you opened your arms and your hearts to me — hugging me and praying for me when you knew I needed it.

"My first appointment with you became a life-changing day. The stories and pictures on your website gave me the courage to come see you. I couldn't believe what you did for others, and after meeting you for the first time, I knew you could help me.

In under three weeks, I was ready to stand tall with my daughter on her wedding day with a bright and beautiful smile like the smile I once had on my own wedding day, 40 years ago.

I began to love myself too, in a brand new way, with all the shame of a diseased smile finally cast off. And I think my husband fell in love with me all over again. When my daughter and her husband left for the honeymoon, we felt like we were on our honeymoon, too.

My husband was amazed and touched at how you were able to do what no one else could, mainly to get me beyond my fear. And no one can believe you did it without sedation or any drugs to calm me.

I felt uplifted and supported from the first moment I walked into your office, and the day you eliminated my disease was one of the greatest days of my life. I can never thank you enough.

Within three weeks, my treatment was complete, and I was not only freed from decades of disease, I had my pretty smile back. No words can express the overwhelming emotions of pure joy I felt in finding my smile again after so many years.

Nothing can express the raw, overriding emotion my husband felt when he finally saw me with my new smile — the one he hadn't seen for years."

~ Donna Atkinson



Fig. 3b

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AACD free webinars focus on accreditation

The American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry (AACD) continues to offer free webinars focusing on accreditation through the AACD Webinar Series.

The series, sponsored by Ivoclar Vivadent, features many speakers scheduled to appear at the AACD's 27th Annual Scientific Session in Boston later this spring. The session will take place May 18-21 at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston.

Participants can register for individual webinars in the series by visiting www.aacd.com/index.php?module=cms&page=501. No special equipment or programming is needed. Past webinars have been archived on the AACD website. Upcoming webinars include:

- "Composite Mirroring: Aiding with Accreditation and Beyond," by Brian LeSage, DDS, on March 7 from 12 to 1 p.m. CST. Participants will review

multiple smile design principles and tie them into the accreditation examination criteria, evaluate fault with compromise reviewed cases and learn to correct and manage many of the AACD accreditation criteria parameters, and discuss contour, finishing, and polishing to create a seamless, undetectable and appropriate luster to direct composite restorations.

- "Advanced Accreditation Webinar: Case Type IV and V," by Brian LeSage, DDS, on April 11, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. CST. Attendees will understand how cases for accreditation are judged based on specific criteria, learn to discern fine details in judging cosmetic dentistry and present cosmetic dentistry cases for feedback.

- "Cosmetic Pearls for the General Practitioner," by Marty Zase, DMD, on April 11, from 12 to 1 p.m. CST. Participants will learn to eliminate sensitivity with bleaching and bonding procedures, learn to utilize ovate pontics to make natural-looking bridges and build confidence in cosmetic restorations.

Archived webinars include:

- "Indirect Porcelain Veneers: Cutting-Edge Concepts, Techniques and Materials," by Dennis Wells, DDS. Attendees will understand what constitutes an ideal case for accreditation, how to accurately determine the degree of preparation needed to optimize the final result and maximize the amount of enamel remaining and

various successful accreditation case components and how to achieve them clinically.

- "Advanced Accreditation Webinar: Case Type III," by Betsy Bakeman, DDS. Participants will understand how cases for accreditation are judged based on specific criteria, how to discern fine details in judging cosmetic dentistry, and they will have the opportunity to present cosmetic dentistry cases for feedback.

- "Advanced Accreditation Webinar: Case Types I & II," by Nils Olson, DDS. Olson provides an in-depth analysis of how accreditation cases are judged. This webinar is especially helpful for members working toward accreditation. [G](#)

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Family member testimonial

"Sometimes it is hard to deal with reality, and Donna was literally paralyzed by her fear of dental care. Donna's way was to keep her lips pursed and hope that no one noticed. She finally agreed to go for help just three weeks before our daughter's wedding because of what she had read about how you helped others with fears like hers.

"I was so proud of Donna making the commitment to begin care with you, yet I could only guess how difficult the surgery was going to be for her. That night, I could see and feel her fear, yet I was helpless; but she was determined.

"The next morning, I had prepared myself and fully expected to see her pain afterward. It never happened. Instead, I saw pure relief and happiness in Donna's eyes. And there was absolutely no lingering pain following the surgery you did.

"She had so much peace about the whole process because of each of you. Her new smile, just two weeks later, was the best gift Donna could have given our daughter and me."

~ Carl Atkinson,
(Donna's husband)

* Sadly, several months later, Carl was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.



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