

Ever the student as well as the expert practitioner, Dr. Willock studies this image of decay in a tooth.



Is it true, as reported by the U.S. Public Health Service, that 98 percent of all Americans have some form of dental disease? And that many, if not most, of these dental problems are related to other sometimes serious health problems?

“While the statistical reports may vary,” says Dr. Michael Willock, a holistic dentist practicing in Chapel Hill, “there’s no question that dental health is a critical issue in our country. Reports that I’ve seen indicate that 18 percent of all Americans have such poor oral health that they can’t chew properly. Annually, there are over 60 million extractions of teeth, nine million root canal procedures, and over 200 million fillings are placed. Nearly one-eighth of all adult Americans have no teeth at all.”

By bacteria count, the oral cavity is one of the least sanitary parts of the body, he points out. “Complicating the dental health picture even more,” he says, “are the issues of mercury-silver amalgam fillings, nickel crowns, bio-incompatible dental materials, electrogalvanism caused by the use of dissimilar metals, and dead teeth—that is, root canals—all of which can potentially contribute to health problems throughout the body. Most people are not sensitive to these things, but many are.

“In my studies, I’ve come to understand that the major organ acupuncture meridians also flow through the region of the oral cavity, and the teeth can affect these major organs at a distance through their influence on these meridian-energy pathways. We are becoming more aware of how gum and dental disease can contribute to heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, premature births, pneumonia, and other health problems.”

A PERPETUAL STUDENT

Dr. Willock—traditionally trained as a dentist at UNC-Chapel Hill—is relentless in his pursuit of new knowledge on behalf of his patients.

He is a member of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT), and recently completed an 83-hour post-graduate course in environmental medicine for the health care professional at the Southwest College of Naturopathic

Medicine, in Scottsdale, Arizona, in classes made up of physicians and naturopaths. He was the only dentist in the class.

“Our purpose was to study the natural history of environmental illnesses, chemical sensitivities, and the impact on our bodies of such heavy metals as mercury and nickel and cadmium—metals commonly used in dentistry. There was also emphasis on neurotoxicity, endocrine toxicity, the effect of specific compounds on the immune system, and—of great importance—effective methods to detoxify the body.”

Shortly after completing this work, Dr. Willock went to Irving, Texas, to study with Jerry Tennant, MD, ND, at the Tennant Institute for Integrative Medicine, whom he describes as “one of the great pioneering thinkers in the evolving field of integrative medicine.

“Dr. Tennant was among the first researchers to make links between the health of the teeth and the health of other organs in the body,” notes Dr. Willock. “Now all of medicine is beginning to recognize the effects of dental materials and infections on the rest of the body.

“There are,” he points out, “critical issues about dental health and whole body health. Infections in teeth—which we call decay—cause canals and the bone around teeth to put out poisons called gliotoxins and thioethers that affect the meridian of the infection. Further, some dental materials are often toxic. Mercury, for example, is one

Oral Health *a Critical Issue*

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of the most poisonous substances known. Nickel, common in crowns and braces, is toxic to the brain and other organs.”

Today, Dr. Willock points out, “we have superior materials to place in teeth, such as composite resins and ceramics that bond to the tooth and seal it much better, and are less toxic than many traditional materials. Every person is different, however, and people often react differently to various materials.”

HOMEOPATHY AND ORAL HEALTH

Most recently, Dr. Willock has become a student of homeopathy specifically as it relates to oral health. It is a long-established system of healing that seeks to cure illness using remedies made from plants, mineral, or animal products. “These remedies are

prepared by a process of repeated dilution,” he explains, “which renders them capable of stimulating the healing process. It’s not a method of killing germs. Rather, it is a method of strengthening the individual’s own healing capacities.

“There are many homeopathic remedies that have been found effective in treating various dental conditions,” he explains, “and all of those I’ve been studying carry the seal of FDA approval. There are homeopathic products specifically designed for dentistry.

“I remain a student of homeopathy and integrative dentistry, and I am committed to studying the potential of any procedure or therapeutic approach that has a high likelihood of being beneficial to my patients—never on a trial basis, but only after I am convinced of the efficacy of an approach that I feel clearly has the potential to be of great value to the patient.

“This is the approach, over time, that has led me to the safer removal of mercury amalgam fillings for many patients who generally were experiencing health issues. In terms of my own health, I believe it is greatly improved because all of the mercury contained in amalgam fillings has been removed from my mouth. Some people are more sensitive than others to the toxic effects of mercury leakage—and clearly I am one of those people. Many people have a genetic predisposition for sensitivity to mercury and other heavy metals, and for others, there appears to be no problem for them.” **h&h**

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A holistic approach to oral health and wellness