

The ethnic diversity within our borders is one of this country's great strengths," observes Chapel Hill holistic dentist Dr. Michael Willock, "and it also serves to complicate the lives of dentists and their patients.

"People came here from the East and the West, from the North and the South, from countries all over the world—and they still do. And when they arrive and stay, they most often engage in the process of assimilation.

"When I look in the mouth of a patient with significantly crowded teeth, I may be challenged a bit as I attempt to sort out the consequences of a potential genetic mix. I may see a Swedish jaw bone with an Irish skull and German teeth. Within their native countries, the teeth and the jaw bones fit perfectly, free of malocclusions. But here, generations later, that is often not true. As one consequence of our genetic blending, Americans have more crooked teeth than any other place in the world.

"Further, there is a preponderance of missing teeth—one of the most common congenital malformations. The Center for Disease Control estimates that more than 20 percent of us lack one or more wisdom teeth, for example, and I'm pleased to be included in that group. I've been spared the presence of any wisdom teeth."

Fortunately, modern dentistry offers excellent options for correcting these dental issues, says Dr. Willock. "I had a woman patient just this week who had two premolars that had rotated 90 degrees and thus were seriously affecting her bite. Through the use of crowns, we were able to bring the teeth into proper alignment so that she can now chew in a proper and healthy way. I've seen teeth that simply failed to erupt, others that have partially emerged, and still others that come in at every conceivable angle. Fortunately, there are creative ways to address such problems."

PASSIONATE STUDENT

As a holistic dentist, Dr. Willock is tireless in his efforts to learn skills and acquire knowledge that will benefit his patients. Most recently he was in Chicago for a meeting of the International Academy of Biological Dentistry and Medicine (IABDM), and to complete his work for certification as a biological dentist (*see photo*).

Dr. Willock is also a long-time accredited member of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology (IAOMT). "IAOMT," he notes, "is made up of physicians, dentists, and PhDs with a long-standing interest in relieving and removing toxic metals from the mouths of our patients, most notably the mercury which makes up about half the content of 'silver' amalgam fillings. The IABDM has an even broader interest in identifying and eliminating toxic materials that can be harmful to patients, especially those with a genetic predisposition to these substances—which happens to be true in my own case. I experienced very positive health outcomes as the result of the removal of all of my amalgam fillings."



Dr. Willock is running short of wall space to display his various degrees, awards, and certifications. The latest addition to the collection: certification as a biological dentist by the International Academy of Biological Dentistry and Medicine.

Complications of a Genetic Stew

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The positive note, he says, is that "we now have superior materials to place in teeth, such as composite resins and ceramics that bond to the tooth and seal it much better than can be accomplished with amalgam silver-mercury or other metals. The need to use problematic materials such as mercury, nickel, and cadmium is rapidly decreasing."

Also of intense interest to these professional organizations, and to Dr. Willock, are the

health consequences that sometimes manifest as the result of mixed metals in the mouth—such as gold, silver, and mercury.

"Extensive research shows that the electro-magnetic frequency of metals differs from that of a healthy human's frequency," he says, "and mixed metals in an acid or alkaline solution create what is called a battery effect. The consequence is a chemical reaction in the mouth that may be linked to health issues because of stray electrical currents."

In the past year, Dr. Willock's extensive studies have included completion of an 83-hour post-graduate course in environmental medicine for health care professionals at the Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine, in Arizona, and on-going study with Dr. Jerry Tennant in Texas at the Tennant Institute for Integrative Medicine. Notes Dr. Willock, "Dr. Tennant was among the first researchers to identify and verify links between the health of the teeth and the health of other organs in the body.

"It was in working with Dr. Tennant that I first became aware of the link between acupuncture meridians and oral health. 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 now more aware of how gum and dental disease can be a factor with a host of health problems, including heart attacks, strokes, diabetes, premature births, and pneumonia among them."

FOOD AND HEALTH

As an important part of his whole-health approach, Dr. Willock is gaining expertise on the impact of nutrition and supplementation on health generally and oral health specifically.

"I see a great many dental and health issues that are related to poor habits of diet," he observes. "One of the major parts of the toxicology course I've completed was devoted to understanding how good nutrition and supplementation can power up our cells.

"We were offered a guide in this understanding nearly 100 years ago, by a dentist, Dr. Weston Price. Around the turn of the century, he noticed a strong correlation between dental health and physical health: a mouth full of cavities went hand in hand with a weak body susceptible to disease. In his subsequent studies, which took him to countries around the world, he noticed a dramatic association between tooth decay and the increasing use of processed foods. His book, *Nutrition and Physical Degeneration*, is considered a seminal work by many." *h&h*

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