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**W**hile he has been known for years as an excellent general and cosmetic dentist in his Chapel Hill practice, Dr. C. Michael Willock is now passionately embracing his emerging identity as a student and leader among holistic practitioners.

He has crisscrossed the country innumerable times in the past 18 months in pursuit of knowledge and techniques (and, often, certifications) that will better serve his patients, gaining expertise in biological dentistry, blood chemistry, links between acupuncture meridians and oral health, homeopathic remedies with dental applications, nutrition and supplementation, environmental and detoxification issues, and critical relationships between oral health and general physical health.

“A key word to describe my interests is *bio-compatibility*,” he says. “Every material and substance I put into a patient’s mouth has the potential to harm or help that patient.

“It’s well-established, for example, that the mercury used in amalgam fillings can pose serious health problems for people who are sensitive to that substance. My personal goal is to gain the knowledge and experience that will absolutely assure me that *all* of the substances I use with my dental patients are the best they can possibly be, free from contamination or risks of any kind. That is the simple reason that I am always seeking out new information from experts in the field, looking for every scrap of knowledge that may be helpful to my patients.”

Dr. Willock himself has high sensitivity to mercury, and experienced a dramatic improvement in his own health after removal of metal from his mouth.

“It’s also well-understood that there is a problem with amalgam in terms of expansion and contraction with temperature changes in food,” he says. “Dental amalgam, over time, causes fractures in teeth and itself becomes brittle and breaks.

“And in some instances, patients are unusually sensitive to the mercury content of the fillings. A growing number of my patients have reported improved health that they believe is due at least in part to the removal of their silver-mercury fillings.”

Dental amalgam—principally made up of mercury and silver—gets brittle over time, Dr. Willock explains, “and from the day it is placed, it begins to leak because it does not bond to the tooth, but is rather a tight ‘press fit.’ And mercury is a highly toxic substance according to many governmental agencies, including the EPA, FDA, and the manufacturers of the amalgam material.



Patient education and expert care are staples in Dr. Willock’s practice

## Holistic Choices for Oral Health

“Now we have superior materials to place in teeth, such as ceramic, zirconium, and composite resins that do bond to the tooth and seal it much better.”

Dr. Willock, an accredited member of the International Academy of Oral Medicine and Toxicology ([www.IAOMT.org](http://www.IAOMT.org)), is one of the few dentists in the area who has had extensive training in the safe removal of amalgam fillings.

### USING IODINE

Oral health issues manifest in many ways. As an education aid for patients, and to monitor progress in combating periodontal disease, Dr. Willock set up a high-power microscope in his practice that projects what is found on a swab from a patient’s mouth to a large computer monitor. “Patients are often horrified at what they see that is resident in their mouths,” he says with a smile. “The device is serving its purpose: people are brushing and flossing like never before.”

And for many of these patients, he adds a bit of holistic wisdom. “An elderly pastor went through this microscope regimen some time ago, and he was absolutely thunderstruck by what we found alive in his mouth. I advised him to regularly use

a very weak mix of Lugol’s Iodine solution, available from his pharmacy, which I personally use every time I brush—just a couple of drops on my toothbrush. I gave him instructions on exactly how to use this product. Three weeks later he was back in the chair, and there was not a single bug dancing around on the computer monitor—or in his mouth.

“And the supplement CoQ10 is valuable in calming the inflammation of periodontal disease, and it’s also good for your heart. I’m always happy to share my knowledge about supplements related to oral health with my patients.

“Periodontal disease is of course an important inflammatory condition which we can treat effectively, especially when we find it in early stages. In general terms, inflammation and stress exacerbate every dental problem.

“We’re continuing to discover the links between oral health issues and other health problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and premature births. And there are other stress-induced oral health issues ranging from painful nuisance (canker sores) to more important concerns, including:

*Bruxism*, when patients grind and clench

their teeth while sleeping, often inflicting serious damage to their teeth;

*Dry mouth*, often a side effect of medications for depression. In its more serious form it is called Sjogren’s Syndrome that affects the eyes as well as the mouth;

*Lichen planus*, manifesting as white lines, sores and ulcers in the oral cavity, believed to be a reaction to viral infections caused by stress.

### NUTRITIONAL ISSUES

If you have a farm and grow your own food, says Dr. Willock, “odds are you will have good, nutritious food on your table every day. But for the vast majority of us, that of course is not an option.

“Most of us are not aware of the toxins that we routinely consume—the high fructose corn syrup, the aspartame, the MSG, and processed foods. There is a strong correlation between our waistlines and the food we take in—and when the emphasis is on chips and sodas and processed foods, the results can be measured, and they certainly affect quality of life. They affect the quality of our oral health, as well. For the sake of our oral health and our overall health, we all need to become informed consumers.” *lwh*

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