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Thursday, October 7, 2004

### Small screws a big plus to denture wearers Implants give dentures more stability for eating

By John Hinton  
CLEMMONS JOURNAL EDITOR

#### CLEMMONS

James Wilmoth visited his dentist in July after he decided that he wanted to try something different to keep his dentures in place.

Wilmoth, 67, who lives in Boonville, had used an adhesive to hold his dentures.

"It held for a little while, but it made me sick," Wilmoth said in a telephone interview last week. "It melted out and went into my stomach. It got to where I couldn't bear it any more."

Dr. Andrew W. Kelly of Clemmons put minidental implants onto Wilmoth's dentures to stabilize them. Wilmoth said that his dentures fit better after the procedure. The implant procedure costs \$2,800.

"I can eat anything I want," Wilmoth said. "Nothing gets under them now. I don't have to take them out every time after I eat."

Kelly recently returned from Atlanta, where he completed a seminar designed to train general dentists and denture specialists how to place the implants in their patients.

There are 33 million Americans who use dentures, according to the School of Dentistry at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

The implants are "ultra small, 1.8 mm diameter implant screws" developed in the 1970s, Kelly said in a statement.

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"They're extremely patient friendly and are designed to stabilize a patient's dentures," Kelly said.

"They work very well and are quite economical."

Kelly has practiced dentistry for 21 years. He is a 1983 graduate of the Howard University College of Dentistry and completed undergraduate studies in microbiology with a minor in chemistry at California State University in Long Beach in 1979.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has granted marketing approval of the implants, Kelly said.

Kelly said that the procedure was appropriate for senior citizens because "it allows them to affordably to stabilize their dentures."

Medicare doesn't cover the procedure, but dental insurance and some employee health plans cover the costs, Kelly said.

Denture wearers complain of problems with eating and even talking normally because of slippage of dentures.

"Four of these tiny implants, which are about the size of ordinary wooden toothpicks, can stabilize a patient's lower denture," Kelly said. "Because they're so minimally invasive, in some instances a patient can receive this treatment in less than two hours, then go out and eat a meal."

Kelly said that minidental implants reached the consumer market in April 1999 after years of research and clinical trials.

"Dentists all over the world are learning to place these mini-implants to stabilize dentures," Kelly said.

Kelly is a member of the American Dental Association, the Academy of General Dentistry, the American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry and the American Academy of Implant Dentistry.

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