

# AN IMPORTANT CHANGE



DR JEAN PAUL DEMAJO EXPLAINS WHY DENTAL AESTHETICS ARE AS IMPORTANT AS FUNCTIONALITY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it! True or false? False. In today's dentistry, aesthetics are as important as functionality. A patient may visit the dentist and tell them how happy they are the bridge they had done many years ago is still doing fine, but what they are unhappy about is its poor aesthetics.

Most of this old bridgework is heavily constructed with visible metal on the palatal side. The frontal view often shows receded gums darkened by the thin metal-ceramic edge of the border of the crown. Spaces appear in between the teeth, again due to gum recession, causing dark shadows and food packing. Food packing leads to plaque build-up and inflammation. Yes this may be kept clean but the aesthetics still leave much to be desired.

The fact remains that in most cases a bridge looks very good when inserted - but 10, 15 or 20 years later it looks very poor, and not in keeping with the rest of your dentition.

## A CASE SCENARIO:

- Middle aged lady loses her two front teeth.
- Teeth replaced with a metal-ceramic bridge many years ago.
- Fully satisfied with performance of bridge but deeply unsatisfied with current aesthetics.

## OPTIONS FOR TREATMENT:

1. New conventional metal-ceramic bridge.
2. Two implants replacing the two missing teeth and two individual crowns covering the already filed-down adjacent teeth.
3. New all-ceramic bridge in zirconia or lithium di-silicate.

Option one will work well but it will not offer the level of cosmetics achieved when using modern highly aesthetic materials, as described

in option three. Zirconia is highly biocompatible and is known as the white gold, offering strength, durability and very good aesthetics. What it does not offer is translucency due to its general opacity.

This is easily overcome by translucent lithium di-silicate. Translucency is a term used to describe a tooth or crown, which allows light to shine through. Normally present at the tips and sides of teeth, it offers a very natural look. The disadvantage of this material is that unlike zirconium bridges, lithium di-silicate cannot be used for the replacement of posterior teeth due to the biting load they would be subjected to, leading to possible fracture. The implant option seems a bit invasive especially when both the adjacent teeth are already prepared to accommodate a bridge.



Extra-oral view before the treatment



Extra-oral view after the treatment

This shows there are many solutions for an aesthetic problem. What is important is knowing what options are out there, together with their advantages and disadvantages. Timeframes and costing must also be weighed out. Ask your dentist!

Dr Jean Paul Demajo is a Dental and Implant Surgeon, trained in London working in private practice in Malta

