

South Hills Dentist Brings High-tech to Teeth

Dr. Greg Peterson has been serving his patients for 25 years, but it wasn't until he took a professional training course in California offered by Millennium Dental Technologies that he found a new device that convinced him he could help his patients better.

Called the PerioLase, the high-tech name can be translated into essentially a machine that, by using laser technology, can treat a whole host of gum-related problems once relegated to the specialist hands of periodontists.

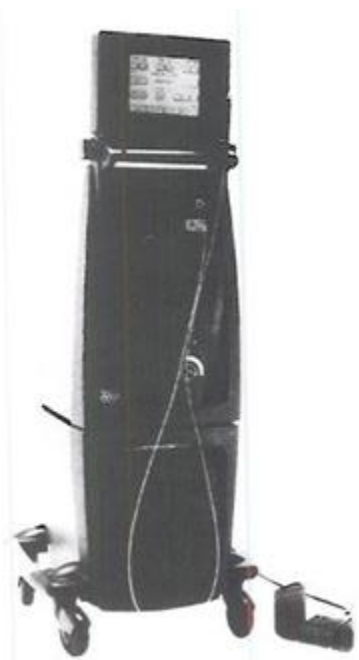
Peterson said that while the LANAP procedure won't phase out the need for the periodontist, it will give patients more options for treatment right in the office of the dentist that they've known for years.

"About 60 percent of the population has gum disease in one form or another," Peterson said. "By using the LANAP procedure, we're able to treat the disease much less invasively. What's great about it is, in the past, all we had to offer was conventional therapy, which entailed a scalpel and sutures procedure, which could be rather painful. The other option was you would go to the other room and pick out denture teeth. Now we can see all the people who decline surgery, treat them, and grow bone back. The old procedure removed tissue and added cadaver bone. This releases their own stem cells and helps grow their bone back."

The way the procedure works is also much more comfortable for the patient. Most treatments can be done in two 1 ½ hour appointments, and, using nothing more than basic Lidocane, there is minimal down-time for patients. With a traditional surgical procedure, patients would go home and sleep, having to deal with the pain of the procedure. With Peterson's LANAP procedure, patients can go back to work or back to their families to enjoy the rest of their day. "It's much more comfortable than the other types of procedures out there and it costs about the same," Peterson said. "It's a win-win for the patient. In reality, it's very similar to Lasik's contribution to eye surgery. LANAP is going to change dentistry just as much. Now doctors can just zap a laser for a few seconds and send patients home."

Physically, the machine is as benign-looking as the procedure itself. Standing about three feet tall by 11 inches across, the business end of the LANAP procedure comes from the top of a fiber-optic hose held in the dentist's hand by a wand. The laser beams out of the cable, guided by the dentist's control of the pencil-shaped wand. Every two or three passes, a new tip is cut in the cable for maximum effectiveness. In fact, the fiber optic cable is the only consumable part of the machine.

For patients, the LANAP procedure can be used for more than just periodontal uses, Peterson said.



“It helps in taking impressions for crowns, helps to treat cold sores and canker sores, removes lesions, growths and different things like that,” he said. “It seems like the longer we have it, the more uses we find for it. There are more and more articles in the literature about lasers coming into the practice. There’s even a different laser that they actually drill teeth with. We have used it for people with TMJ, where you can actually biostimulate and help the soreness and loosen up the jaw. It stimulates healing.” The LANAP procedure is covered by most insurances, but you won’t find it everywhere. Peterson is one of only two dentists in Western Pennsylvania licensed in and offering the service to his patients. While he currently sees about 125 patients each week, Peterson will soon be moving to a much larger, more equipped space in the same building he’s been in all these years.

“We’re treating all the people who were afraid to get anything done in the past,” he said. “There are thousands and thousands afraid of the procedure the way it used to be done. One of the earlier patients we did in June said his mouth feels so much better. Another fellow came in and told me that [the periodontist] had given up on eight of his teeth. I said, ‘Come over and let’s give it a go.’ I was able to treat the rest of them. I don’t believe in giving up if we can save some teeth, especially teeth that someone else gave up on.”