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AMERICANS STILL FEAR ROOT CANAL TREATMENT – BUT SHOULDN'T

*New Survey Shows Nearly Half of Americans Perceive Root Canal Treatment
as "Excruciating," Even Though Procedure is Virtually Painless*

CHICAGO, October 23, 2006 – The American Association of Endodontists (AAE) today released the results of a new consumer survey that shows that misplaced fears about root canal treatment remain common among Americans. Despite the reality that root canal treatment is virtually painless, nearly half (48.5 percent) of survey respondents viewed it as "excruciatingly painful," and many ranked the procedure just below a spinal tap in terms of painful medical procedures. However, these perceptions are based on longstanding myths that don't reflect the realities of modern endodontic treatment.

When survey respondents were asked if several common medical myths were true or false, nearly 50 percent thought it was true that root canals are painful. Similarly, almost half (44.2 percent) of respondents also believed the myth that cold, wet weather causes the common cold. Despite being surrounded by misconceptions, root canal procedures are actually the most comfortable, effective and safest way to save the natural tooth.

Myth No.1 – Root canal treatment is painful

The most widely-held myth surrounding root canals is that the procedure itself is long and painful. However, root canal treatments actually relieve pain. Thanks to the expertise of endodontists, the dentists who specialize in root canal treatment, as well as anesthesia and advanced technologies, root canal treatment can be as routine as having a cavity filled.

Many patients realize that root canal pain is simply a myth after experiencing the procedure. In fact, a recent AAE study revealed that patients who have experienced root canal treatment are six times more likely to describe it as painless than those who have not had the treatment. "When I learned that I needed a root canal treatment, the news made me really nervous," says Barbara Guerra. "But my endodontist was able to ease my concerns. The treatment itself was quick and caused me absolutely no discomfort."

Root canals are both a painless and time-efficient way to relieve tooth discomfort. A report by the American Dental Association showed that root canal treatment usually lasts less than a half-hour. In addition, several scientific studies have also shown that root canals have a 95 percent success rate in saving abscessed or infected teeth, with many teeth lasting a lifetime after the procedure.

Myth No. 2 – Extraction is a good alternative to root canal treatment

Another common myth is that extraction is a comparable alternative to a root canal. When the interior of a

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patient's tooth is badly infected, the patient usually has three choices: extraction of the tooth, extraction and replacement with an implant, or root canal treatment. Patients who extract the tooth and do not replace it can have a difficult time chewing, have an increased risk of gum disease, and their teeth may shift. Patients who choose extraction with implant replacement will have the affected tooth removed and replaced with a prosthetic that is screwed into the jaw. This option requires multiple dental visits, multiple surgeries and can be quite costly. Root canal treatment is the only option that saves the natural tooth.

While many people fear root canal treatment, the AAE consumer study showed that the majority (51 percent) would prefer it to getting the tooth extracted (15.9 percent) or getting the tooth replaced with an implant (20.4 percent).

"It's always best to save the natural tooth," says AAE President John S. Olmsted, D.D.S., M.S., of Greensboro, N.C. "Root canal treatment is an effective alternative that lets people save their natural teeth."

Myth No. 3- Root canal treatment is more expensive than other options

Some people may be concerned that root canal treatment is more expensive than other options. In fact, root canal treatment tends to cost less than other options. For example, according to the American Dental Association, the national average for an implant is approximately \$2,500, while a root canal and permanent crown typically cost hundreds of dollars less. A recent study published in the *Journal of Endodontics* showed that implants take longer to fully function and have more post-operative complications. This may be because implants can require multiple surgeries, not to mention months of healing time post-surgery – resulting in greater inconvenience and increased expense.

Although root canal procedures are shrouded in myths and misconceptions, root canal treatment is actually a painless, safe and cost-effective procedure that saves more than 17 million natural teeth each year. Most importantly, a root canal performed by an endodontist, a root canal specialist, is the best way to preserve the natural tooth, ultimately helping to achieve optimal overall health.

For more information about root canal treatment, visit www.rootcanalspecialists.org.

American Association of Endodontists

The American Association of Endodontists, headquartered in Chicago, represents more than 6,600 members worldwide, including approximately 95 percent of all eligible endodontists in the United States. The Association, founded in 1943, is dedicated to excellence in the art and science of endodontics and to the highest standard of patient care. The Association inspires its members to pursue professional advancement and personal fulfillment through education, research, advocacy, leadership, communication and service. For more information, visit the AAE Web site at www.aae.org.

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