



Root Canal or Dental Implant?

Study: Root Canals and Dental Implants Equally Successful, but Implants May Need More Follow-up Procedures

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Nov. 19, 2008 -- Root canals and dental implants are equally successful, but implants may need more follow-up maintenance, a new study shows.

Dental implants replace tooth roots. A root canal is a procedure designed to save an infected or decayed tooth.

The study, published in the November edition of the *Journal of Endodontics*, comes from researchers at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

James Porter Hannahan, DMD, and Paul Duncan Eleazer, DDS, followed 129 dental implants and 143 root canals for three years, on average.

Dental implants and root canals had similar success rates, meaning that the teeth in question were still in the mouth and hadn't rotated or needed further correction. Those success rates were 98% to 99%.

When the researchers also considered teeth with "uncertain" results -- meaning that the teeth had shifted a bit but didn't need to be removed after root canal or dental implants -- both procedures shaved off about 10% points from their success rate, a similar decline for each procedure.

The only difference that stood out was the need for further intervention. The study shows that about 12% of the dental implants needed intervention, compared to about 1% of the root canals.

The bottom line?

"There appears to be little difference in the success of the two treatments," except that "implants required additional procedures more frequently" than teeth that got root canals, Hannahan and Eleazer write.

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