



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Tara Hamacher
tara.hamacher@edelman.com
312-240-2861

Meg O'Connor
meg.o'connor@edelman.com
312-233-1322

Don't Be Fooled Into Losing Your Natural Teeth

American Association of Endodontists Launches Root Canal Awareness Week to Save Natural Teeth by Eliminating Misplaced Fears About Root Canal Treatment

CHICAGO, April 1, 2007 – The American Association of Endodontists (AAE) today announced the debut of Root Canal Awareness Week (April 1-7, 2007) to dispel long-standing myths about root canal treatment and increase understanding of the procedure.

Of all dental procedures, root canal treatment has the most notorious reputation. "I'd rather have a root canal than . . ." is a common – and foolish – cliché. In reality, root canal treatment is virtually painless. It's also the only way to save a natural tooth with inflamed or infected pulp.

"It may sound peculiar to dedicate a week after a dental procedure, but Root Canal Awareness Week has an important educational purpose," said AAE President John S. Olmsted, D.D.S., M.S., of Greensboro, N.C. "Many people don't know that root canal treatment is no more uncomfortable than getting a filling placed. It's a beneficial treatment that *eliminates* pain and helps people keep their natural teeth."

In fact, research is showing that saving natural teeth has extensive health implications. A December 2005 study in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* found that tooth loss was associated with a greater risk of heart disease, with those who had lost the most teeth at the greatest risk. This remained the case even when other risk factors such as smoking, alcohol, and obesity were taken into account. Another study, published in the November 2006 *Journal of Dental Research*, found a relationship between endodontic disease – which root canals treat – and coronary heart disease.

Root canal treatment saves more than 17 million natural teeth each year, making it more hero than villain. And although nearly half of people in a recent AAE survey view root canal treatment as "excruciatingly painful," another AAE study revealed that patients who've *experienced* root canal treatment are six times more likely to describe it as painless than those who haven't had the treatment.

The Root Canal Specialists

Root Canal Awareness Week also provides an opportunity to raise awareness of endodontics, a dental specialty unfamiliar to many Americans. Endodontists, dentists who specialize in root canal treatment, have at least two additional years of advanced training in endodontics beyond dental school. Endodontists perform almost 25 root canal treatments each week, whereas general practitioners perform fewer than two.





“Advanced training and new technologies have allowed endodontists to revolutionize root canal treatment,” said Dr. Olmsted. “We have been able to transform a procedure that once was completed with the naked eye and standard dental instruments into a truly microsurgical process.”

Root Canal Treatment – The Best Option

When patients suffer from tooth pain, they have three choices: extraction of the tooth, extraction and replacement with an artificial tooth or implant, or root canal treatment. Root canal treatment is the only option that saves the natural tooth. An impressive 76 percent of participants in a recent AAE survey said they would prefer to have a root canal than lose their tooth. That’s no surprise when considering the alternatives - tooth extraction can result in difficulty chewing, an increased risk of gum disease and shifting teeth, while getting an implant requires multiple visits and surgeries, which can not only be quite costly, but can prevent patients from enjoying certain foods for life.

“Saving my natural tooth was a smart and painless choice,” said recent patient Barbara Guerra. “Getting a root canal let me keep my natural smile, and now I’m back to eating all the foods I enjoy.”

During root canal treatment, the endodontist removes the source of tooth pain – the inflamed pulp inside the tooth. The inside of the tooth is then cleaned, filled and sealed. The procedure typically lasts less than a half-hour, and has a proven 95 percent success rate in saving abscessed or infected teeth. Many teeth saved with root canal treatment can last a lifetime.

For more information about Root Canal Awareness Week or the dental specialty of endodontics, or to find an endodontist in your area, 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 AAE, 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.

###