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Contact:

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

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

**ENDODONTISTS DISPEL MYTHS
ABOUT ROOT CANAL TREATMENT WITH NEW INTERACTIVE 3D TECHNOLOGY**
*Innovative Imaging Software Currently Used in Dental Schools Offers Potential to
Reduce Patient Anxiety, Increase Comfort*

CHICAGO, July 19, 2006 – Endodontists, the dentists who specialize in root canal treatment, have always been leaders in the adoption of technology that improves patient care, reduces pain and creates the most comfortable environment for patients. Now, two endodontists have harnessed the power of advanced three-dimensional interactive imaging technology, developed by Stanford and NASA, to improve the root canal treatment process by helping patients better understand the procedure, ultimately lessening anxiety and increasing comfort levels.

The “3D Interactive Tooth Atlas,” a computer program consisting of hundreds of interactive computer models of teeth, and thousands of photographs and x-rays, was developed by Drs. W. Paul Brown and Eric Herbranson, endodontic professors at the University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry, San Francisco, California, in partnership with the Stanford/NASA Biocomputation Center. The Tooth Atlas was created through grants from the National Institutes of Health and is currently being used in 34 dental schools in the U.S. as well as many others worldwide to teach the complexities of tooth anatomy. Because the Tooth Atlas can clearly demonstrate the intricacies of dental procedures, it is being adopted by a growing number of endodontic offices to educate patients about the complex nature of a root canal, and help ease concerns regarding pain and duration of the procedure.

“It’s a common misconception that root canal treatment is painful – when in fact, the treatment *relieves* pain,” says Dr. Brown. “The Tooth Atlas lets endodontists take patients ‘inside the tooth’ to better understand how their endodontic treatment saves their natural teeth, so there is less anxiety, and the patient has a more positive overall experience.”

The American Association of Endodontists believes that this imaging technology, and the high-powered personal computers that make its use possible in schools and dental offices, will drastically improve doctor *and* patient understanding of endodontic procedures. As a result, patients will feel more comfortable and experience less apprehension when undergoing their treatment.

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“This imaging technology will improve patient care, by enabling practitioners to increase their skill level, and by giving patients the information they need to be less fearful about root canal treatments,” says Dr. Herbranson. “It’ll change the way endodontists talk to their patients about root canals – and make those conversations a lot easier for patients to understand.”

“I was extremely nervous about my upcoming root canal,” says Amanda Tevis, a recent endodontic patient. “However, the Tooth Atlas helped me understand specifically what the procedure would entail, and I felt a lot more knowledgeable and comfortable. It was not a negative experience at all.”

Drs. Brown and Herbranson proposed the idea of a virtual, interactive database of teeth after Dr. Brown was introduced to a group from NASA in 1998 that was looking to develop high-resolution imaging and surgical simulators for an eventual manned flight to Mars. Because the flight will last several years, a virtual database of surgical procedures will be necessary to enable the doctor onboard to complete unfamiliar surgeries – or to help another crew member perform them if the doctor is unable.

The technology holds even greater promise for future dental applications. Drs. Brown and Herbranson are now working on a dental simulator that allows users to virtually “perform” procedures such as fillings using a computer and a dental instrument that provides tactile feedback simulating the actual feel of the procedure. This will provide students with a greater familiarity with the procedures before working on patients, and provide them more opportunities to enhance their skills, since they’ll be able to frequently practice the procedures via computer.

Other important contributors to the development of the Tooth Atlas include Kevin Montgomery, Ph.D., Director of the Stanford/NASA Biocomputation Center at Stanford University, and Bruce Fogel, D.D.S., part-time endodontic professor at the University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry.

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.