



AAE POSITION STATEMENT

The following statement was prepared by the AAE Special Committee on Implants. AAE members may photocopy this position statement for distribution to patients or referring dentists.

IMPLANTS

Introduction

The American Association of Endodontists has as its mission the fostering of excellence in endodontics and the highest standard of patient care. Our vision is to be a global resource in endodontic knowledge for the profession and the public.

Dentists and their patients have many alternative treatments available to preserve or replace diseased teeth. In the case of teeth with irreversible pulpal disease, endodontic therapy is a highly predictable method to retain teeth that otherwise would have been extracted. Many large studies show retention rates of more than 90 percent [1, 2]. Alternatively, extracted teeth may be replaced with implants [3-6]. Considerable progress has been made in restoring oral function for patients, but considerably less progress has been made in identifying the best strategies for selecting one treatment approach over another [7, 8], and accordingly, no guidelines set forth by the dental profession regarding endodontic versus implant therapy currently exist. This statement is intended to offer the AAE's position on this issue.

Treatment Planning Based on the Best Evidence Produces Ethical and Effective Results

Although there is a lack of clinical trials that directly compare one treatment approach to another [7, 8], there are generally accepted guidelines for the ethical consideration of treatment planning and informed consent. These ethical guidelines provide a framework for all clinical decisions.

Quality dental care can only be provided when treatment planning decisions are made by both the dentist and the patient, based on the patient's general health status and specific oral health needs [9, 10]. The recommended treatment should be safe, predictable, cost-effective, respectful of patient preferences, aimed at preserving normal anatomy and function, and based upon the best available scientific evidence [10-12].

Evidenced-based dentistry incorporates into dental practice "judicious integration of systematic assessments of clinically relevant scientific evidence, relating to the patient's oral and medical condition and history, with the dentist's clinical expertise and the patient's treatment needs and preferences" [12].

There is a growing body of evidence to assess the outcomes of both endodontic and implant therapy. Most studies of endodontic therapy analyzed the success or failure by using criteria that included both clinical and radiographic measures, while most studies of single tooth implant treatment reported the outcome as survival (the implant was still in place), or failure (the implant had been removed.)

A critical analysis of the applicable literature requires categorization of the level of evidence to assess its validity, clinical relevance and clinical importance [13]. Consideration must also be given to study design issues. In comparing studies involving different treatment modalities, the consideration of the dependent measures observed is especially important [14]. In the case of endodontic or implant therapy, no prospective studies, and only one retrospective study, compare the two directly.