

WHITE STUFF: Dentist pioneers new therapy for people who would need dentures

Porcelain keeps patients smiling

by Chris Denham

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A DENTAL surgery near Hythe is one of the only places in Kent to offer a new treatment for people with serious tooth problems.

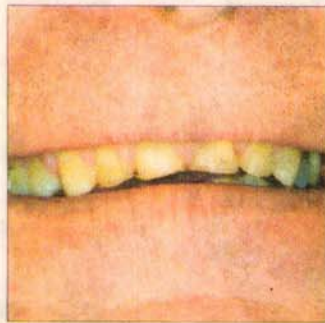
Pennypot-based dentist Manoj Patel is one of few to be able to rebuild teeth or even implant them for people who would otherwise need dentures.

The treatment is not available on the NHS and must be paid for – but Manoj believes it is worth it for the improvement over having the traditional treatment.

Rare

He said: "Every year four dentists qualify as specialists in this field and typically they go into London, so it is pretty rare to get this service somewhere like Hythe.

"When teeth are worn down we hand-build them from porcelain. Typically such erosion comes from people with gastritis, ano-



■ Before and after: Tooth erosion caused by gastric reflux can now be rebuilt

rexia, bulimia or who grind their teeth in their sleep.

"Normally what happens is all their teeth are taken out and replaced by dentures. I just build them up."

The cost for rebuilt teeth ranges from £2,000 to £3,000 (dentures are about £1,000 in comparison) and the effect is startling.

The treatment itself is painless although a little messy as by the time people have the treatment their teeth are usually in a bit

of a state. When a tooth is worn away the nerve dies and rots, with all that that entails.

A wax impression is taken of the mouth, then a model is made of what it will look like and the teeth are built in a lab, taking two to three months.

Implants are made of porcelain but look like the real thing.

Manoj qualified 10 years ago and started off working at Guy's Hospital in London, before tiring of the bustle and heading

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towards the coast.

He said: "I love it here by the coast, it's lovely.

"I do a lot of care homes now and with the way things are in the NHS I try to treat children and people on low incomes before people who could afford to pay more."

■ As with virtually every dentist in east Kent, Pennypot Dental Surgery has a waiting list for adult NHS patients.



■ Dentist Manoj Patel with his assistant Inga Bliuvaite

Picture: Barry Goodwin pd133415

NHS WAITING LIST

NEED an NHS dentist and not registered? Join the queue.

The state of NHS dental treatment has been something that has dogged the Government for several years and seems to show little sign of sorting itself out. Manoj Patel has seen the situation develop from the other side of the chair.

He said: "In 2004 what they said was 'this is how much we provided for NHS dentists last year, so this is what you

are allowed to spend next year'.

"Every time an NHS dentist closes down we compete for the budget and open our gates; word gets round and we are full within hours. But because it is based on historic spending that is always going to be the situation.

"For instance, if the Nickolls Quarry development goes ahead we won't be able to help as we are capped and there's no money for it."