

Root Canals Pose Health Threat

An Interview with George Meinig, D.D.S.

Dr. Meinig brings a most curious perspective to an expose of latent dangers of root canal therapy - fifty years ago he was one of the founders of the American Association of Endodontists (root canal specialists)! So he's filled his share of root canals. And when he wasn't filling canals himself, he was teaching the technique to dentists across the country at weekend seminars and clinics. About two years ago, having recently retired, he decided to read all 1174 pages of the detailed research of Dr. Weston Price, (D.D.S). Dr. Meinig was startled and shocked. Here was valid documentation of systemic illnesses resulting from latent infections lingering in filled roots. He has since written a book, "Root Canal Cover-Up EXPOSED - Many Illnesses Result", and is devoting himself to radio, TV, and personal appearances before groups in an attempt to blow the whistle and alert the public.

MJ Please explain what the problem is with root canal therapy.

GM First, let me note that my book is based on Dr. Weston Price's twenty-five years of careful, impeccable research. He led a 60-man team of researchers whose findings - suppressed until now, rank right up there with the greatest medical discoveries of all time. This is not the usual medical story of a prolonged search for the difficult-to-find causative agent of some devastating disease. Rather, it's the story of how a "cast of millions" (of bacteria) become entrenched inside the structure of teeth and end up causing the largest number of diseases ever traced to a single source.

MJ What diseases? Can you give us some examples?

GM Yes, a high percentage of chronic degenerative diseases can originate from root filled teeth. The most frequent were heart and circulatory diseases and he found 16 different causative agents for these. The next most common diseases were those of the joints, arthritis and rheumatism. In third place - but almost tied for second - were diseases of the brain and nervous system. After that, any disease you can name might (and in some cases has) come from root filled teeth.

Let me tell you about the research itself. Dr. Price undertook his investigations in 1900. He continued until 1925, and published his work in two volumes in 1923. In 1915 the National Dental Association (which changed its name a few years later to The American Dental Association) was so impressed with his work that they appointed Dr. Price their first Research Director. His Advisory Board read like a Who's Who in medicine and dentistry for that era. They represented the fields of bacteriology, pathology, rheumatology, surgery, chemistry, and cardiology.

At one point in his writings Dr. Price made this observation: "Dr. Frank Billings (M.D.), probably more than any other American internist, is due credit for the early recognition of the importance of streptococcal focal infections in systemic involvements."

What's really unfortunate here is that very valuable information was covered up and totally buried some 70 years ago by a minority group of autocratic doctors who just didn't believe or couldn't grasp - the focal infection theory.

MJ What is the "focal infection" theory?

GM This states that germs from a central focal infection - such as teeth, teeth roots, inflamed gum tissues, or maybe tonsils - metastasize to hearts, eyes, lungs, kidneys, or other organs, glands and tissues, establishing new

areas of the same infection. Hardly theory any more, this has been proven and demonstrated many times over. It's 100% accepted today. But it was revolutionary thinking during World War I days, and the early 1920's!

Today, both patients and physicians have been "brain washed" to think that infections are less serious because we now have antibiotics. Well, yes and no. In the case of root-filled teeth, the no longer-living tooth lacks a blood supply to its interior. So circulating antibiotics don't faze the bacteria living there because they can't get at them.

MJ You're assuming that ALL root-filled teeth harbor bacteria and/or other infective agents?

GM Yes. No matter what material or technique is used - and this is just as true today - the root filling shrinks minutely, perhaps microscopically. Further and this is key - the bulk of solid appearing teeth, called the dentin, actually consists of miles of tiny tubules. Microscopic organisms lurking in the maze of tubules simply migrate into the interior of the tooth and set up housekeeping. A filled root seems to be a favorite spot to start a new colony.

One of the things that makes this difficult to understand is that large, relatively harmless bacteria common to the mouth, change and adapt to new conditions. They shrink in size to fit the cramped quarters and even learn how to exist (and thrive!) on very little food. Those that need oxygen mutate and become able to get along without it. In the process of adaptation these formerly friendly "normal" organisms become pathogenic (capable of producing disease) and more virulent (stronger) and they produce much more potent toxins.

Today's bacteriologists are confirming the discoveries of the Price team of bacteriologists. Both isolated in root canals the same strains of streptococcus, staphylococcus and spirochetes.

MJ Is everyone who has ever had a root canal filled made ill by it?

GM No. We believe now that every root canal filling does leak and bacteria do invade the structure. But the variable factor is the strength of the person's immune system. Some healthy people are able to control the germs that escape from their teeth into other areas of the body. We think this happens because their immune system lymphocytes (white blood cells) and other disease fighters aren't constantly compromised by other ailments. In other words, they are able to prevent those new colonies from taking hold in other tissues throughout the body. But over time, most people with root filled teeth do seem to develop some kinds of systemic symptoms they didn't have before.

MJ It's really difficult to grasp that bacteria are imbedded deep in the structure of seemingly-hard, solid looking teeth.

GM I know. Physicians and dentists have that same problem, too. You really have to visualize the tooth structure - all of those microscopic tubules running through the dentin. In a healthy tooth, those tubules transport a fluid that carries nourishment to the inside. For perspective, if the tubules of a front single-root tooth, were stretched out on the ground they'd stretch for three miles!

A root filled tooth no longer has any fluid circulating through it, but the maze of tubules remains. The anaerobic bacteria that live there seem remarkably safe from antibiotics. The bacteria can migrate out into surrounding tissue where they can "hitch hike" to other locations in the body via the bloodstream. The new location can be any organ or gland or tissue, and the new colony will be the next focus of infection in a body plagued by recurrent or chronic infections.

All of the "building up" done to try to enhance the patient's ability to fight infections - to strengthen their immune system - is only a holding action. Many patients won't be well until the source of infection - the root canal tooth - is removed.

MJ I don't doubt what you're saying, but can you tell us more about how Dr. Price could be sure that arthritis or other systemic conditions and illnesses really originated in the teeth - or in a single tooth?

GM Yes. Many investigations start with the researcher just being curious about something - and then being scientifically careful enough to discover an answer, and then prove it's so, many times over. Dr. Price's first case is very well documented. He removed an infected tooth from a woman who suffered from severe arthritis. As soon as he finished with the patient, he implanted the tooth beneath the skin of a healthy rabbit. Within 48 hours the rabbit was crippled with arthritis!

Further, once the tooth was removed the patient's arthritis improved dramatically. This clearly suggested that the presence of the infected tooth was a causative agent for both that patient's and the rabbit's - arthritis.

[Editor's Note - Here's the story of that first patient from Dr. Meinig's book: "(Dr. Price) had a sense that, even when (root canal therapy) appeared successful, teeth containing root fillings remained infected. That thought kept prying on his mind, haunting him each time a patient consulted him for relief from some severe debilitating disease for which the medical profession could find no answer. Then one day while treating a woman who had been confined to a wheelchair for six years from severe arthritis, he recalled how bacterial cultures were taken from patients who were ill and then inoculated into animals in an effort to reproduce the disease and test the effectiveness of drugs on the disease.

With this thought in mind, although her (root filled) tooth looked fine, he advised this arthritic patient, to have it extracted. He told her he was going to find out what it was about this root filled tooth that was responsible for her suffering. "All dentists know that sometimes arthritis and other illnesses clear up if bad teeth are extracted. However, in this case, all of her teeth appeared in satisfactory condition and the one containing this root canal filling showed no evidence or symptoms of infection. Besides, it looked normal on x-ray pictures.

"Immediately after Dr. Price extracted the tooth he dismissed the patient and embedded her tooth under the skin of a rabbit. In two days the rabbit developed the same kind of crippling arthritis as the patient - and in ten days it died. ..The patient made a successful recovery after the tooth's removal! She could then walk without a cane and could even do fine needlework again. That success led Dr. Price to advise other patients, afflicted with a wide variety of treatment defying illnesses, to have any root filled teeth out."]

In the years that followed, he repeated this procedure many hundreds of times. He later implanted only a portion of the tooth to see if that produced the same results. It did. He then dried the tooth, ground it into powder and injected a tiny bit into several rabbits. Same results, this time producing the same symptoms in multiple animals.

Dr. Price eventually grew cultures of the bacteria and injected them into the animals. Then he went a step further. He put the solution containing the bacteria through a filter small enough to catch the bacteria. So when he injected the resulting liquid it was free of any infecting bacteria. Did the test animals develop the illness? Yes. The only explanation was that the liquid had to contain toxins from the bacteria, and the toxins were also capable of causing disease.

Dr. Price became curious about which was the more potent infective agent, the bacteria or the toxin. He repeated that last experiment, injecting half the animals with the toxin-containing liquid and half of them with the bacteria from the filter. Both groups became ill, but the group injected with the toxins got sicker and died sooner than the bacteria injected animals.

MJ That's amazing. Did the rabbits always develop the same disease the patient had?

GM Mostly, yes. If the patient had heart disease the rabbit got heart disease. If the patient had kidney disease the rabbit got kidney disease, and so on. Only occasionally did a rabbit develop a different disease - and then the pathology would be quite similar, in a different location.

MJ Perhaps we should back up and talk about oral health - to PREVENT needing an extraction. Caries or inflamed gums seem much more common than root canals. Do they pose any threat?

GM Yes, they absolutely do. But let me point out that we can't talk about oral health apart from total health. The problem is that patients and dentists alike haven't come around to seeing that dental caries reflect systemic - meaning "whole body" - illness. Dentists have learned to restore teeth so expertly that both they and their patients have come to regard tooth decay as a trivial matter. It isn't.

Small cavities too often become big cavities. Big cavities too often lead to further destruction and the eventual need for root canal treatment.

MJ Then talk to us about prevention.

GM The only scientific way to prevent tooth decay is through diet and nutrition. Dr. Ralph Steinman did some outstanding, landmark research at Loma Linda University. He injected a glucose solution into mice - into their bodies, so the glucose didn't even touch their teeth. Then he observed the teeth for any changes. What he found was truly astonishing. The glucose reversed the normal flow of fluid in the dentin tubules, resulting in all of the test animals developing severe tooth decay! Dr. Steinman demonstrated dramatically what I said a minute ago: Dental caries reflect systemic illness.

Let's take a closer look to see how this might happen. Once a tooth gets infected and the cavity gets into the nerve and blood vessels, bacteria find their way into those tiny tubules of the dentin. Then no matter what we do by way of treatment, we're never going to completely eradicate the bacteria hiding in the miles of tubules. In time the bacteria can migrate through lateral canals into the surrounding bony socket that supports the tooth. Now the host not only has a cavity in a tooth, plus an underlying infection of supporting tissue to deal with, but the bacteria also exude potent systemic toxins. These toxins circulate throughout the body triggering activity by the immune system - and probably causing the host to feel less well. This host response can vary from just dragging around and feeling less energetic, to overt illness - of almost any kind. Certainly, such a person will be more vulnerable to whatever "bugs" are going around, because his/her body is already under constant challenge and the immune system continues to be "turned on" by either the infective agent or its toxins - or both.

MJ What a fascinating concept. Can you tell us more about the protective nutrition you mentioned?

GM Yes. Dr. Price traveled all over the world doing his research on primitive peoples who still lived in their native ways. He found fourteen cultural pockets scattered all over the globe where the natives had no access to "civilization" - and ate no refined foods.

Dr. Price studied their diets carefully. He found they varied greatly, but the one thing they had in common was that they ate whole, unrefined foods. With absolutely no access to tooth brushes, floss, fluoridated water or tooth paste, the primitive peoples studied were almost 100% free of tooth decay. Further - and not unrelated - they were also almost 100% free of all the degenerative diseases we suffer - problems with the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, joints, skin (allergies), and the whole gamut of illnesses that plague Mankind. No one food proved to be magic as a preventive food. I believe we can thrive best by eating a wide variety of whole foods.

MJ Amazing. So by "diet and nutrition" for oral (and total) health you meant eating a pretty basic diet of whole foods?

GM Exactly. And no sugar or white flour. These are (and always have been) the first culprits. Tragically, when the primitives were introduced to sugar and white flour their superior level of health deteriorated rapidly. This has been demonstrated time and again. During the last sixty or more years we have added in increasing amounts, highly refined and fabricated cereals and boxed mixes of all kinds, soft drinks, refined vegetable oils and a whole host of other foodless "foods". It is also during those same years that we as a nation have installed more and more root canal fillings - and degenerative diseases have become rampant. I believe - and Dr. Price certainly proved to my satisfaction - that these simultaneous factors are NOT coincidences.

MJ I certainly understand what you are saying. But I'm still a little shocked to talk with a dentist who doesn't stress oral hygiene.

GM Well, I'm not against oral hygiene. Of course, hygiene practices are preventive, and help minimize the destructive effect of our "civilized", refined diet. But the real issue is still diet. The natives Dr. Price tracked down and studied weren't free of cavities, inflamed gums, and degenerative diseases because they had better tooth brushes!

It's so easy to lose sight of the significance of what Dr. Price discovered. We tend to sweep it under the rug - we'd actually prefer to hear that if we would just brush better, longer, or more often, we too could be free of dental problems.

Certainly, part of the purpose of my book is to stimulate dental research into finding a way to sterilize dentin tubules. Only then can dentists really learn to save teeth for a lifetime. But the bottom line remains: A primitive diet of whole unrefined foods is the only thing that has been found to actually prevent both tooth decay and degenerative diseases.

Root Canal Alternatives

One should seek out a biologic dentist who is familiar with this approach. A simple way to locate one in your community would be to contact all the health food stores for recommendations of the best mercury free dentist in the area. If you already have a root canal you can contact [Dr. Pendergrass](#) at the University of Kentucky for a kit that can assay to see if there are organisms present in the tooth which are secreting potent toxins.

If the tooth is infected with significant pathologic bacteria there are several options. The simple one would be to have the root canal redone with a material called Biocallex. Biocallex actually destroys many of the organisms and is far less likely to cause problems in the short run. If this fails and one is seriously debilitated it may be necessary to extract the tooth.

Dentist Tells You That You Need A Root Canal

If you are not seeing a biological dentist already try to find someone who understands this process. That would be the first step. Many biological dentists have alternatives, such as infra-red lasers, that can save the tooth in about 25% of the cases. If the tooth is dead and there is no way to revive it, then it would be best to have a root canal with Biocallex.

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