

The dynamic dental duo

Dental implants can change patients' lives, writes ANNEMARIE JENNINGS

Implants are one of the most exciting developments within dentistry in recent years, possibly ever. But while most of us know that implants can replace a missing tooth when topped with a crown or bridge (tiny titanium screws placed in the jaw bone act as the missing tooth root), many people don't realise they can also be used to anchor a denture in place, giving it something fixed to grip onto. Just two can secure a lower denture, and four an upper denture.

Towards the end of last year Dr Grant McAree, owner of The Whyte House dental surgery in Topsham, joined forces with local denture specialist Rob Gosling to launch a dedicated denture implants service. Grant does the implants, Rob does the dentures. Even they've been surprised at the take-up. "The phone hasn't stopped ringing since we sent out our first flyers," says Grant.

Don't struggle – seek help

There are evidently a lot of people out there who are unhappy with their dentures or struggling on with just a few teeth through fear of the dentist or worries a denture won't fit.

"It makes you very self-conscious," said Lesley, one of Grant and Rob's patients. "I wouldn't smile, I'd avoid cameras, I'd be constantly scratching my top lip when talking to people to deflect from my teeth."

Lesley had an "absolute, total fear" of the dentist that had meant she hadn't been for a check-up in 15 years.

Another of their patients, Eve, agrees: "Because my denture didn't fit properly, it was very uncomfortable eating. I wasn't able to chew meat at all, and if I was invited out I immediately starting worrying about



what I could eat." She'd been battling to find a dentist who could get her denture to fit properly, going back and forth, frequently forced to live without her denture while it was sent away. She saw four dentists: "Each time, they said that was the best they could do, and I just had to get used to it," she says.

"It felt like they'd given up on me. I was desperate in the end."

A painless transformation

Someone recommended Rob to Eve, and Lesley met Grant's senior dental nurse Becky at a wedding fair. "She was so reassuring and encouraging," says Lesley.

Both ladies had an initial implant consultation to assess suitability, involving taking X-rays, impressions and photographs. On the denture side, investigative X-rays were taken and a wax mock-up made to show how the teeth will look after treatment. Then the implants – which are tiny titanium screws – were placed in the upper or lower jaw to give the denture something fixed to hold on to, anchoring it down.

The denture was then attached to the implants, holding it in place. Implants fuse with the bone and are permanently fixed.

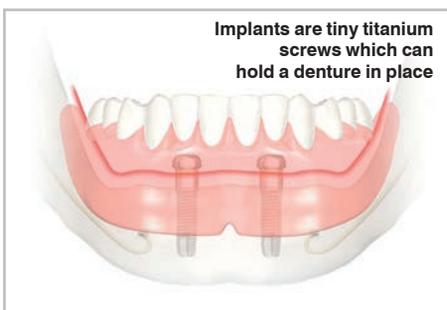
"Grant's got such a calming personality, he just instils confidence," says Lesley. "I'd had a bad experience before, but Grant was completely different: he listened to me,

wanted to know what was bothering me. I can honestly say there wasn't any pain."

Eve adds: "With Rob, nothing's too much trouble. He goes above and beyond on everything. If it's not quite right or you're not happy, he adjusts it until you are."

And the fact that Rob can adjust dentures there and then is a huge plus. "It's not a long drawn-out process," says Eve, "you're never without your teeth, he does them while you wait. Now I can eat meat, crusty bread and Ryvita again! I'm so glad I had it done. It's all been worthwhile."

Lesley says: "I can't praise them enough, they've been amazing." **DL**



Implants are tiny titanium screws which can hold a denture in place

Details

- Implant consultation (included in price of treatment) – £100
- Implant-retained lower denture (two implants + denture, includes implant consultation, CT scan, X-rays, study model, stents, bone augmentation, warranty) – £4,500
- Implant-retained upper denture (four implants + denture, includes implant consultation, CT scan, X-rays, study model, stents, bone augmentation, warranty) – £7,900
- Upper denture (to fit with implant-retained lower denture) – £720