



Semtner with the PerioLase MVP-7 Digital Laser that he uses to treat periodontal disease; his "voodoo" laser.

photos: Huong Fralin

Periodontal team, and a little more >

Executive Summary:

Semtner and Semtner is a company of dentists, fighting not only gum disease, but also taking a shot at your sleeping problems.

By Huong Fralin

Opening wide for the dentist can now be a lifesaver.

As technology continues to advance, so does the practice of dentistry, and on Starkey Road, there lies a husband and wife dental practice that can treat periodontal disease in a new and improved way, and will also screen for sleep apnea.

Rob and Mona Semtner, of Semtner and Semtner DDS, have had their private practice for five years and are on the front edge of fighting periodontal disease. As one of the few offices in the region using a new laser technology, Rob has been able to treat the disease by specifically targeting all of the bacteria that causes problems in gums unlike any other procedure has been able to do.

The protocol associated with this treatment has been able to regenerate lost bone that is a result of the disease, something that also has never been done before.

"I call it my voodoo laser," says Rob, "because one of the neat side effects about this laser is that it has a very positive healing effect on the body that specifically encourages the bodies' own healing." He uses the laser post-operatively or to treat sore joints associated with TMJ, which results in less discomfort. The Semtners use five different laser wavelengths and Rob is the most trained on them, locally, he says.

Gone are the days of biting into a gooey substance to make an impression in order to get a crown or veneer made. At Semtner and Semtner, the dentists can digitally photograph your tooth, look at it from all angles and send it wirelessly to what is essentially a 3D printer that sculpts the shape of the crown from a block of porcelain. If you want, Rob can even customize your new tooth with stains and glazes. He enjoys painting a Virginia Tech logo on the tooth, and he has painted a heart on the back of a patient's front tooth, as well as a lady bug on his wife's tooth because of the nickname her father gave her. "If a dentist isn't an artist, then I don't know who is," says Rob. He says teeth are essentially pottery, and crowns and veneers can be made and placed in one visit.

A new awareness that Rob is pushing the world of dentistry to screen for is sleep apnea, a not-so-silent killer that many people are unaware of. After gaining interest in learning about the science of sleep from a patient who runs a local sleep center, Rob took a few classes on the matter which opened his eyes to how much there is to know.



Adjustable Oral Appliance for those who have mild to moderate cases of sleep apnea.



Rob Semtner taking digital images of a tooth that needs a crown.

By asking simple questions, such as whether the patient snores or feels rested during the day after a full night sleep, and taking a picture of each patient's airway to examine, Rob can refer patients to a local sleep physician or ear, nose and throat specialist if he sees warning signs for the disorder.

Carilion Clinic has referred patients to him for treatment, and he supplies an adjustable

oral appliance that helps open airway passages to patients who have mild to moderate cases of sleep apnea. It's something he feels strongly about, because generic appliances that are not made to fit might help you snore less but won't help with sleep apnea at all. "It is a tremendous problem that most people don't know much about so I feel like it's my duty to provide a little bit of education and help screen for this disease," says Rob. 