

Implant Dentures Done Right

Sure, the process takes some time, but this patient says a beautiful smile is worth the wait

BY ROY CUMMINGS
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He didn't grab the same kind of attention that "The King" did, but just like Elvis Presley about 15 years earlier, Gene Messano met the teenager who would soon become his wife while serving in the Army's 32nd Armor Regiment in Friedberg, Germany, in the early '70s.

"That's my hometown," Melody Messano says of Friedberg. "I was born there, and one day when I was 16, my girlfriend and I were walking along the main road there, and Gene drove by and beeped and waved, and I waved back. The rest, as they say, is history."

That history has spanned 51 years, the first 22 of which were devoted to the military, which meant that Gene and Melody spent a lot of their time on the move. Melody loved the travel, but she could have done without some of the destinations.

"We wound up in Oklahoma for a while, and it was horrible," she says. "It's flat, dusty and the mosquitoes are awful. My favorite place was Fort Knox, Kentucky. It was absolutely beautiful there. Florida's not too bad either. We like it here as well."

Gene and Melody have been living in Florida since 1997, and for the most part it has been an idyllic life. There was a lengthy stretch, though, that proved difficult for Melody, who spent a decade fighting a bothersome oral health problem.

That issue began in 2010, when Melody opted to trade in the conventional upper denture that she had been wearing for more than a decade for a fixed prosthesis secured by dental implants. She was unhappy with the fit and feel of the conventional denture.

Dental implants are root-shaped, screw-like bodies that are surgically placed into the jawbone, where new bone naturally grows around them to form the foundation for an abutment and replacement teeth.

The replacement teeth can be a crown that is cemented or screwed onto the abutment, a partial bridge that can be affixed to one or more implants, or a full denture that can be fastened to a series of implants.

Although the denture worked fairly well for Melody, the implants proved to be another issue altogether.

"They always hurt," Melody remembers. "Then in 2020, my husband and I were having Thanksgiving dinner with my girlfriend, and the implants started to come loose. It was a very odd feeling, so I asked my girlfriend if she knew of a good dentist. She said, *Go see Dr. Patel.*"

Take Two

At DeLand Implant Dentistry, Jayraj Patel, DMD, FAGD, FAAID, DABOI/ID, devoted the bulk of his first visit with Melody to performing a thorough examination. That examination revealed that the cause of Melody's pain and discomfort was an active, deep-rooted infection.

The infection was so great that it had led to bone loss in Melody's jaw, which is why the implants became loose. The only solution, Dr. Patel determined, was to remove the implant-supported prosthesis as well as the implants. Melody gladly agreed to proceed.



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Melody's three years of care included the removal of original implants, infection cleansing, sinus lifts, bone grafts, the seating of new implants and delivery of a new prosthesis.

"My first objective with all patients is to return them to a healthy state," Dr. Patel says. "But in Melody's case, that was going to require an extra step because she was very anxious and frightful. To help her with that we offered to do all that work under *conscious moderate intravenous sedation.*"

Conscious moderate intravenous sedation is a type of sedation that places the patient in a sedated state that allows the patient to relax without pain, anxiety or fear while breathing normally.

Dr. Patel used this type of sedation throughout his treatment of Melody, who needed approximately three months to heal from the debridement and the removal of implants. During that time, Melody once again wore a conventional upper denture, this one fashioned by Dr. Patel.

She didn't wear it very often, though. As with her first denture, Melody often suffered from a *gag reflex* caused by the base of the denture resting on the back of the palate.

That's why, when the time came to decide the next step in her treatment, Melody opted again for dental implants.

That presented a new challenge because Melody had so much bone loss from the lengthy absence of teeth and infection that her jawbone was no longer dense enough to support dental implants.

Dr. Patel had a fix for that called a *sinus lift*.

"During this procedure, which is also known as a *sinus augmentation*, we get to the sinus membrane, gently lift it and place bone grafting material between the membrane and sinus floor. We then wait a few months for that area to heal."

"I was so happy with Dr. Patel's work that I have made him my regular dentist."

— Melody

In treating Melody, Dr. Patel performed two sinus augmentations, one for the left side of her mouth and one for the right. Melody then waited six months for the sinus graft to heal and new bone to grow in the grafted areas.

"Once we determined that the new bone in the sinuses was strong enough to support implants, we seated five implants in Melody's upper arch," Dr. Patel reports. "After that, we gave her about five months to heal from that procedure, then took the next step."

That next step was the fabrication of a new prosthesis. For this Dr. Patel created a *bar retained overdenture*, a removable prosthesis that is hooked onto a bar that is attached to the dental implants.

"The bar connects all the implants, and by doing that it creates more support because those implants are now acting as one unit," Dr. Patel explains. "The bar also helps eliminate pressure from the gums as the denture is retained and supported by the bar. We did that because of all the bone and gum tissue Melody lost from the previous infection in the front area."

"He's My Hero"

When done properly, the dental implant process takes several months to complete. In Melody's case, Dr. Patel needed almost three years to correct the damage caused by the placement of the original implants and restore proper function with a new prosthesis.

During that three-year span, Dr. Patel also restored decayed teeth and repaired a bridge Melody's lower arch. Melody is thrilled with the outcome.

"Dr. Patel is very meticulous; he won't rush anything, but I am very thankful that

Meet the DOCTOR

Jayraj Patel, DMD, FAGD, FAAID, DABOI/ID



earned his dental degree from the University of Florida College of Dentistry. His goal is to deliver comprehensive and compassionate care to patients in a

caring, comfortable and professional environment. He provides personalized and complete care using the latest technologies and treatment modalities with an aim to build long-term relationships with patients based on trust, respect and friendship. Driven by a deep passion to help patients, he is constantly pursuing advanced training through continuing education courses. He has extensive training in implant dentistry through the AAID MaxiCourse from Augusta University Dental College of Georgia and Comprehensive Implant Continuum from Implant Educators. He is certified to perform IV sedation in the dental office. He is a diplomate of the American Board of Oral Implantology/Implant Dentistry, a fellow of the American Academy of Implant Dentistry and Academy of General Dentistry.



JAYRAJ PATEL, DMD, FAGD, FAAID, DABOI/ID

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Dr. Jayraj Patel is known for his exceptional, caring attitude toward his patients and work. He is committed to delivering the most advanced, personalized dental care while offering patients a uniquely satisfying experience. Along with the staff of DeLand Implant Dentistry, he welcomes new patients and any questions concerning the range of services, which include cleanings, preventive care, sedation, and cosmetic, restorative, prosthetic and implant dentistry. For an appointment, call or visit the office.

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he took his time and made sure everything was right," she exudes. "In fact, I'm so happy with his work that I have made him my regular dentist.

"And that's because he's my hero. I almost cry when I think of what he did for me. He's just so sweet and caring. And his entire staff is the same way.

"Everybody there treats you like family, and that's how I see them all. They're like family to me now, so I would absolutely recommend them to anyone who needs a dentist." ■