

Dental Specialists

Having the confidence to smile is a huge achievement for some. Whether due to neglect or nature, there are many reasons why a person's teeth may be in poor condition.

But there's a highly skilled group of experts in the region who are helping many long-suffering Nelsonians to grin again.

Teeth may be small but they're hugely significant parts of our anatomy. Essential for forensics, fascinating for archaeology, they are strong and resilient lumps that we take for granted until there's a problem.

At the front line in the battle against decay is the general dentist, regularly checking patients and encouraging good practise in oral hygiene. The standards are very high and many do advanced work in lots of areas but, when they reach their limits on the more complex or demanding cases, they will refer the patient to one of a number of specialists.

Their titles can sound confusing – maxillofacial surgeons, prosthodontists, periodontists, endodontists and orthodontists – but each caters for specific elements of dentistry, helping provide a full range of treatments.

Andrew Lush and Andrew Marriot of Nelson Orthodontists



Todd Gracia of Nelson Endodontic Centre

For a relatively small centre, Nelson is fabulously served by this select band, whose expertise may be focused on the root of teeth, the gums, tooth alignment, or dental implants.

These specialists work in conjunction with dentists, surgeons and other practitioners – hygienists, technicians and dental therapists – trying to prevent oral disorders. They will treat some but may refer others back to the dentist for treatment by other therapists.

The specialists now have regular three-monthly meetings to discuss cases and exchange ideas. Their presence in Nelson ensures the public has the highest standard of dental care available. And that is something to smile about.

Andrew Lush and Andrew Marriott are orthodontists – the speciality concerned with correct alignment of tooth and jaw positions. Nelson Orthodontics has been in its modern, purpose-built, 27 Waimea Road premises for 13 years.

Press cuttings on the notice board are from the local schools and colleges, from where the bulk of the Andrews' clients come, although an increasing number of adults seek treatment too. Age is not a barrier to moving teeth into their correct place.

The dental brace is the workhorse of the orthodontist but technological advances have improved not only the brace's appearance but also its effectiveness.

Funky designs and colours of the brackets allow for some individual expression, while use of clear or white materials can make the braces almost unseen.

While treatment time varies according to the complexity of the case, 18-24 months is a typical period. Handwritten notes in the practice's comments book such as 'Wow, I love my teeth now!' and 'Confident to smile again' show the hard work is so worthwhile.

Endodontics is the youngest speciality in dentistry and of the 1500 dentists in New Zealand, endodontists number just 19. It concerns diagnosis and treatment of issues on the inside of the tooth, the nerve or root canal, and the root of the tooth.

Todd Gracia established Nelson Endodontic Centre at 5 Bail Street, Stoke, in 2006. After 8 years as a dentist in Hamilton, New Plymouth,

Andrew Cautley



Story and photography by Tim Cuff



Iain Wilson at Nelson Oral Surgery

Nelson and then Dunedin, he undertook 4 years of further training to qualify as a specialist.

From an early age Todd knew he was destined for dentistry. "I think teeth are fascinating," he says. "They're the hardest tissue in the body." As a 16-yr-old he had a wrestling accident in which he damaged some teeth. "I watched the dentist at work and thought I can do that!"

Most dentists do some form of endodontic treatment but the endodontist tends to do the more difficult procedures, or where there have been problems with previous treatment.

Todd's opinion is it's always best to have your own teeth, rather than extract. "That's most likely going to give you the best, most hassle-free, long term solution."

Andrew Cautley is a prosthodontist based in his surgery at 132 Collingwood Street, a hub for health practitioners in the centre of Nelson.

His speciality involves the rebuilding of teeth, and the restoration of function and appearance of teeth.

Veneers, crowns, bridges, implants and cosmetic dentistry are typical procedures for the prosthodontist.

"Dentists do some of the simpler tasks but refer things that are more complicated, for example, a lot don't do more than the simplest implants," says Andrew, who started his practice 17 years ago.

Implants are very much teamwork. "We have a laboratory on site and I work very closely with the technician, Detlef Baum, who makes the porcelain crowns and veneers."

Andrew tends to see older patients for reconstruction work, and younger ones for implants – typically restorative work due to rugby or cycling accidents.

He recently replaced a patient's 2 missing teeth. "As the man was walking out of the door he said 'Thank you for changing my life.' It does have quite a lot of effect on some people."

Iain Wilson is a New Zealand-trained, highly experienced, dental and medical specialist oral and maxillofacial surgeon. In essence, it's surgery on teeth and jaws.

His bright and airy purpose-built facility, Nelson Oral Surgery, is located at 37 Manuka Street, on the quiet outskirts of the city.

Iain's work is hugely varied, and he receives all types of referrals from dentists and doctors from wisdom teeth, dental extractions, dental implants, and all oral pathology and oral medicine.

"We are a low volume, high quality practice, and we take obsessive care to produce the best results for people," he says. "Our philosophy is ideally suited to the meticulous removal of wisdom teeth and – my main interest - dental implants."

"We offer a full and comprehensive Nelson-based dental implant service, often planning and working with the patient's dentist, where we can place, monitor and maintain definitive restorations intended to serve the patient for life."

Helen English's practice, Nelson Periodontics, is in a beautiful old villa, 2 Brougham Street, on the fringe of the city.

Periodontists specialise in treatment of gum disease, and in the placement of dental implants. With a year as a maxillofacial house surgeon at Dunedin Hospital following dental school, Helen always knew she wouldn't take the general dentistry route, instead returning for a further 3 years specialist training.

"I don't really touch teeth," she says. "My area is the gum and bone and everything around the teeth. Treatment can be nonsurgical or surgical, and while surgery is often quite a scary word, it's very localised and doesn't need general anaesthetic."

Gum disease affects about 30% of the population. Loose teeth, bleeding gums and bad breath are all signs of gum disease and if it's established the symptoms won't go away without treatment.

"You wouldn't repaint your house whilst the foundations are crumbling. It's exactly the same with teeth and gums. Of course these days lost teeth can be replaced with implants - that's the other side of my practice - but I'd prefer to save the teeth in the first place!"

www.nelsonortho.co.nz
www.nelsonprosthodontics.co.nz
www.nelsonoralsurgery.co.nz
www.perionz.org

Helen English of Nelson Periodontics

