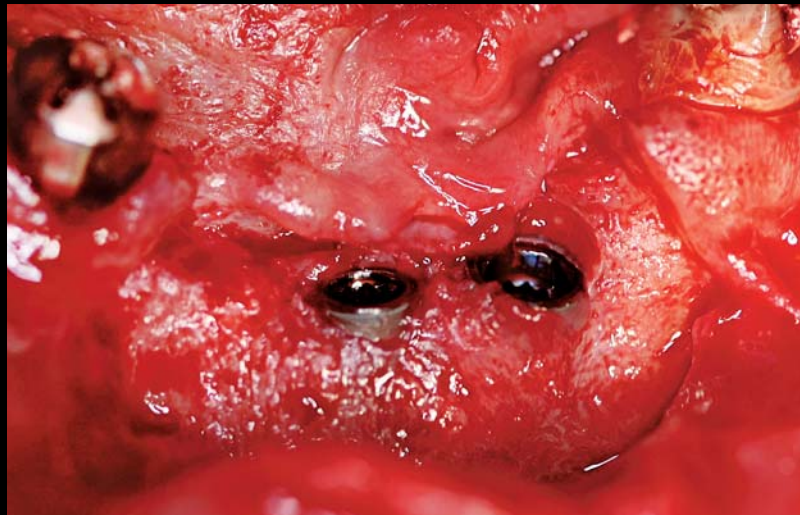


HISTOLOGIC AND CLINICAL RESULTS OF DFDBA WITH LECITHIN CARRIER USED IN DENTAL IMPLANT APPLICATIONS: THREE CASE REPORTS

John A. Lupovici, DDS



Although autogenous bone grafting material has long been considered the gold standard for regeneration of deficient alveolar sites, it has a number of disadvantages. Allograft material avoids many of these but its osteoinductivity has been questionable. An allograft material long used in orthopedics but only recently adapted for oral and maxillofacial grafting sites displays osteoinductivity that has been verified in vitro and offers other clinical benefits. Three treatment reports are presented to illustrate the use of this material, along with histological results.

Learning Objectives:

This article demonstrates the history and use of allograft bone grafting materials in dental implant applications. Upon completing this exercise, the reader should:

- Be aware of the historical performance of graft materials in dental implant procedures.
- Understand the importance of osseous regeneration for successful implant dentistry.

Key Words: bone grafting, allograft, osteoinductivity, implant regeneration

**Assistant Professor, New York University College of Dentistry, Department of Periodontics and Implant Dentistry, New York, NY; Private practice, New York, NY.*

*John A. Lupovici, DDS, 425 Madison Avenue, Suite 900, New York NY 10017
Tel: 212-251-0030 • E-mail: drlupo@mac.com*

Alveolar bone resorption is a common phenomenon, particularly within the first year after tooth loss.^{1,3} Trauma, developmental anomalies, and pathological processes (acute and chronic) also may deprive patients of their native oral bone. In the wake of such phenomena, the residual hard tissue may be inadequate to support dental implants. If implants are placed in the compromised bone, the definitive implant restoration may also be compromised. Negative consequences commonly associated with improperly positioned implants range from biomechanical concerns (eg, screw loosening; fractures of the screw, implant, implant collar, prosthesis, or porcelain)^{4,6} to compromised final aesthetics (eg, unnatural emergence profiles, poor screw-access opening positioning).

To avoid such problems and enable clinicians to accurately recreate natural dental function and aesthetics, a variety of bone augmentation strategies have been developed. Onlay, inlay, and veneer grafts;^{7,9} sinus augmentation;¹⁰⁻¹² ridge splitting and expansion;^{13,14} guided bone regeneration;¹⁵⁻¹⁹ nerve lateralization;²⁰ and distraction osteogenesis²¹ all have a documented record of success when used to treat horizontally and vertically atrophic ridges, extraction sockets, implant-associated defects, and other anatomical deficiencies. Most of these techniques require the use of bone grafting materials, autografts, allografts, xenografts, and alloplasts all have been documented to be successful, used either alone or in combination.

Among them, autogenous bone has long been considered the gold standard. Depending upon the donor site and the manner in which it is harvested, autogenous bone has proven to be osteoconductive, osteoinductive, and nonantigenic—all properties of an ideal grafting material. The use of autogenous bone, however, has also been associated with a number of disadvantages, including patient morbidity; parasthesia, anesthesia, and neurosensory changes to the proximal teeth and tissue; edema; ptosis; incision dehiscence; and infection.^{8,22,25} Implants placed in autogenous block grafts have been associated with lower survival rates^{26,27} and significant resorption has been reported.^{7,28,31}

Allograft bone, commercially available in a variety of sizes, shapes, and processing techniques, is an alternative to autogenous material. Successful results from the use of allografts have been reported in the periodontal and implant-regenerative literature for more than three decades,³² and using this material frees the patient from the need for a second surgical site.

Some controversy exists over whether freeze-dried bone allograft (FDDBA) or demineralized freeze-dried bone allograft (DFDBA) is superior for regeneration. Successes with both have been documented in case reports, and

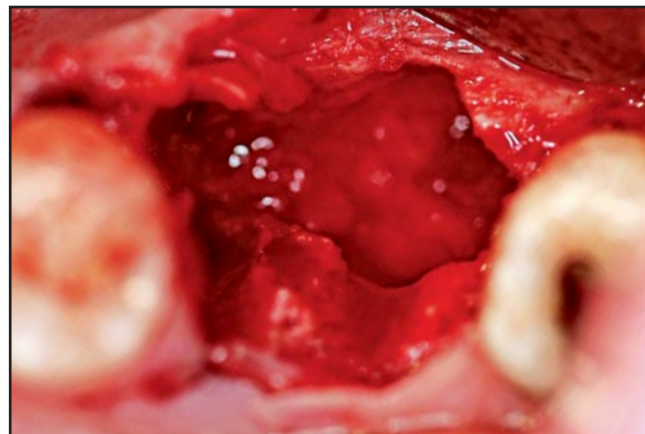


Figure 1. Initial occlusal view of the extraction socket of the mandibular first molar.



Figure 2. Postextraction alveolus filled with allograft (with lecithin carrier) material.

when used primarily in intraosseous defects, significant clinical differences between the two materials have not been found.^{19,33-37} However, DFDBA has historically been considered to be a better choice in challenging regenerative sites because of the demineralization process. In this process, as described by Urist,³⁸ the allograft is bathed in an acidic solution, thereby exposing the bone morphogenetic proteins that theoretically render it osteoinductive.

Nonetheless, when used in dental applications in combination with a barrier membrane, clinical results of DFDBA grafts in both humans and animals have varied significantly,^{39,42} and the osteoinductivity of the DFDBA has come into question. The variation in clinical results has been linked to a number of potential factors including sterilization techniques,^{43,45} particle size,⁴⁶ and donor age.⁴⁷ The processing techniques of individual bone banks also may affect the inductive capacity of the bone.^{48,49}

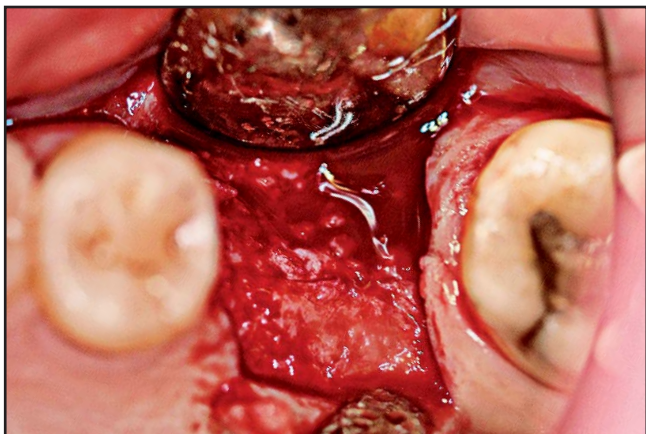


Figure 3. Occlusal view of the regenerated site three months after extraction and grafting.

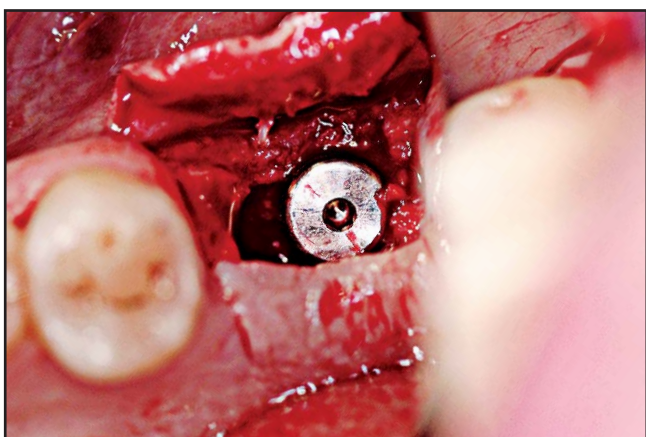


Figure 4. The implant was placed in the newly regenerated bone adjacent to the biopsy core harvest site.

An allograft material long used in orthopedics (ie, RegenerOss Allograft Putty, Biomet/3i, Palm Beach Gardens, FL) has recently been adapted for oral and maxillofacial grafting applications. The allograft presents in putty form, consisting of DFDBA (40% by weight), which is suspended in lecithin, an organic phosphatidylcholine. The DFDBA in this allograft receives routine screening for HIV, hepatitis, and other infectious agents and furthermore undergoes a process to verify the osteoinductivity of every sample. This is achieved by means of the Saos cell-proliferation test. Results of this assay have demonstrated a correlation coefficient of 0.850 ($p < 0.0005$) with implantation of demineralized bone into athymic rat muscle.⁵⁰

Although one aspect of the processing technique for removing lipids from demineralized bone has been found to significantly inhibit osteoinduction, adding purified lecithin to the DFDBA appears to restore the osteoinductive activity and enhance biological activity above that of

a standard demineralized bone preparation.⁵¹ Naturally present in cell membranes, tissues, and organs, lecithin is believed to play an active role in the biologic calcification that occurs during osteogenesis.⁵²

Clinical benefits of the lecithin carrier include the fact that, as a lipid, it is hydrophobic, offering high resistance to irrigation, blood, and saliva. It provides remarkable ease of handling and excellent graft containment after being exuded into the defect site. When incubated at 37 degrees C, the putty maintains a solid state and remains intact at the graft site for 7 to 14 days, after which it is absorbed by the body with no foreign-body reaction. Autogenous or other additional bone grafting material can be easily combined with it, should that option be desired. Other commercially available allograft putties use glycerol as a binding agent and hence may pose concerns over toxicity.⁵³

The following clinical cases illustrate the use of this allograft material to regenerate three distinct osseous defects.

Case Presentations

Case #1

A 47-year-old, systemically healthy female patient presented with a periodontally hopeless mandibular right first molar. Following administration of local anesthesia (lidocaine with epinephrine 1:100,000), the molar was sectioned, and the mesial and distal roots were atraumatically elevated from the alveolus (Figure 1). Care was taken to avoid traumatizing the alveolus. All granulation tissue was carefully curetted from the socket, which then was filled with the inductive allograft putty (Figure 2). A 2-mm-thick slice of a collagen wound dressing material was placed over the graft to better contain the putty. The tissues were sutured, and no attempt to achieve primary closure was made.

The patient received antibiotic therapy consisting of amoxicillin 250 mg three times a day for one week. The regenerated area remained unloaded throughout the healing process. The patient returned for evaluation at one, three, six, and 12 weeks postoperatively. Soft tissue healing was uneventful.

Three months after the extraction and augmentation, the patient presented for implant placement. Intraoral examination revealed successful maintenance of the alveolar ridge width. Following administration of anesthesia, a full-thickness flap was reflected, and the preservation of the hard tissue was confirmed (Figure 3). A 3-mm trephine histology core was harvested on the mesial aspect of the graft site. This specimen was immediately fixed in 10% neutral buffered formalin for later histological preparation and examination.

The osteotomy created by harvesting the trephine core was enlarged, and the bone quality was noted to be Type 2 to 3, according to the Lekholm and Zarb scale. A parallel-walled implant was placed (Figure 4), and primary stability was verified. The tissues were then sutured, and primary closure was achieved.

Three months after implant placement, osseointegration was verified radiographically. A full-thickness flap was reflected to enable placement of a healing abutment. To accommodate this, removal of a 1 mm × 2mm wedge of augmented bone from the distal aspect of the previously regenerated socket was found to be necessary. The harvested bone was immediately stored in 10% neutral buffered formalin for later histological examination.

Histological Processing & Examination

Both samples were dehydrated in increasing grades of ethanol and subsequently infiltrated with resin. Following embedding in methylmethacrylic resin, the samples were polymerized and sectioned vertically using a cutting-grinding unit. The 250- μ m-thick units obtained were further reduced by microgrinding and polishing to a final thickness of approximately 20 μ m to 30 μ m. The sections were stained with hematoxylin and eosin and then examined under a light microscope equipped with an image system.

Microscopic examination of the histologic section obtained at three months revealed newly formed bone and minimal residual graft material. The residual graft particles that were present were in close contact with bone or connective tissue. The new lamellar bone present appeared vital with osteocytes in the lacunae (Figure 5).

The histology sample obtained at six months displayed further new bone and vasculature with a reduced presence of residual graft material as well as medullary space. No histological signs of inflammation were present in any of the sample slices (Figures 6 and 7).

Case #2

The patient was a 54-year-old male who presented for full-mouth rehabilitation with fixed, implant-retained restorations. His medical history was unremarkable. The same antibiotic regimen as described above was administered. A crestal incision of one edentulous mandibular segment was made, and reflection of a full-thickness gingival flap revealed the horizontal dimension of the residual alveolar ridge to be approximately 4 mm to 5mm. Two implants were placed according to the manufacturer's protocol, and primary stability was achieved

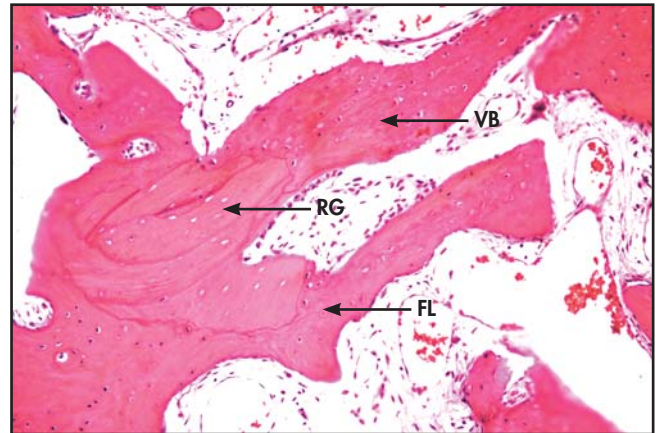


Figure 5. Three-month histology of newly formed bone, in association with residual graft material. A large degree of trabeculation is evident. Original magnification ×10.

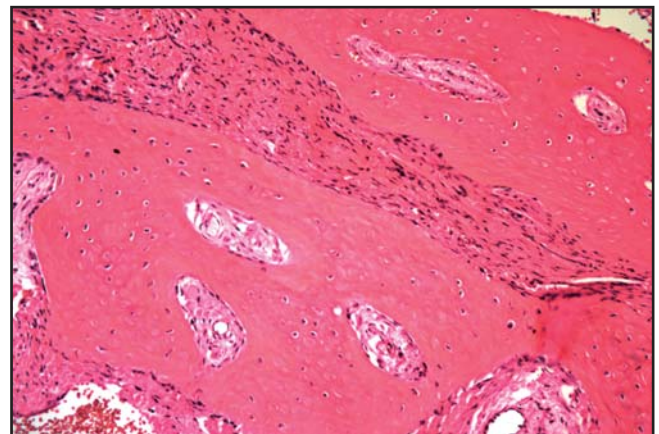


Figure 6. Six-month histology sample displaying new bone and vasculature, with a reduction in medullary space. Original magnification ×10.

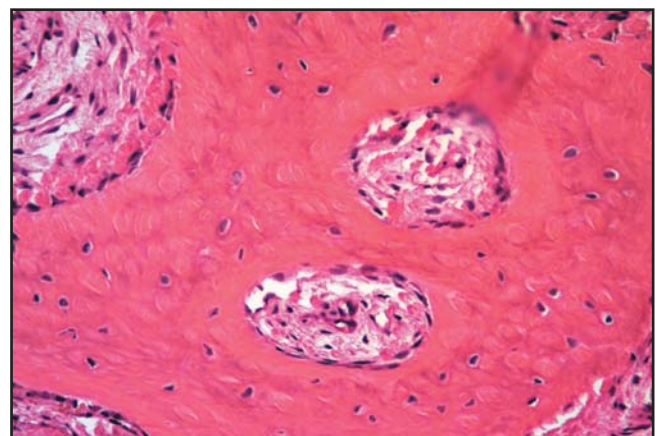


Figure 7. High-power magnification of six-month sample displaying blood vessel. Original magnification ×40.



Figure 8. A buccal dehiscence defect exposed four threads on the facial aspect of the mesial implant.

for both. A buccal dehiscence defect, however, exposed four threads on the facial aspect of the mesial implant (Figure 8).

RegenerOss Allograft Putty (Biomet/3i, Palm Beach Gardens, FL) was applied to the dehiscence to completely cover the exposed threads (Figure 9), and a biologic membrane was trimmed to fit the contours of the graft site and placed in position (Figure 10). Passive primary closure was obtained by means of periosteal releasing incisions.

Primary closure was maintained throughout the healing period. Five months after implant placement, a radiograph indicated successful osseointegration. One month later, re-entry for healing abutment connection revealed that the previously exposed threads were completely encased in newly regenerated bone (Figure 11).

Case #3

A 44-year-old male patient presented with a failing three-unit anterior maxillary fixed partial denture that had been fabricated 15 years earlier. Examination revealed that the right central incisor structure was inadequate to support a replacement restoration. The left central incisor site, a longstanding pontic, was an atrophic knife-edge ridge. The left lateral incisor presented with severe periodontal involvement, vertical loss of attachment, and mesiobuccal loss of all facial plate to the apex.

After the patient began antibiotic treatment, a papillary-preserving releasing incision was made on the mesial of the right lateral incisor, extending to the left canine. A full-thickness flap was reflected, and the right central incisor and left lateral incisor were extracted, revealing a loss of horizontal and vertical bone (Figures 12 and 13).

The allograft putty material was adapted to the ridge (Figure 14), and a resorbable cross-linked collagen membrane was placed on top of the putty. Periosteal releasing incisions were made to attain passive primary closure.

After six months of healing, papillary-preserving incisions were made, and a full-thickness flap was reflected, revealing notable regeneration of the alveolar crest (Figure 15). Two implant osteotomies were created in the two lateral incisor sites, and a 2 mm × 8 mm trephine core was harvested from a point midway between them for histological examination, and immediately stored in 10% neutral buffered formalin for histological examination. The regenerated bone was judged to be Type 2 to 3. Two implants were then placed in the lateral incisor positions, and primary stability was achieved. The implants healed unremarkably.

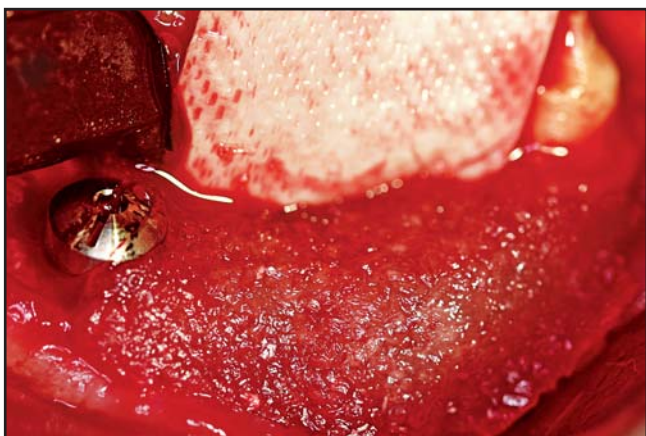


Figure 9. RegenerOss Allograft Putty (Biomet/3i, Palm Beach Gardens, FL) was applied to cover the residual threads.

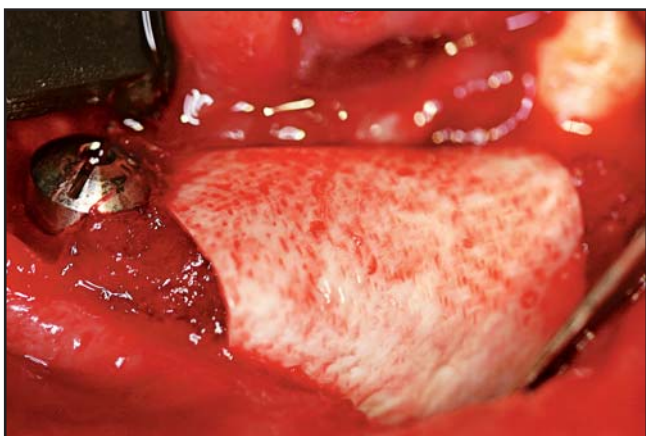


Figure 10. A biologic membrane was adapted over the graft material.

Histological preparation was executed in the same manner as described above. Microscopic examination of the histologic section revealed vital bone cells in conjunction with notable woven bone (Figure 16). The amount of residual graft particles noted in this sample was minimal and concentrated in the middle sections.

Discussion

The success of attempts at osseous regeneration has been shown to depend substantially on the defect morphology and the graft material used. In this case series, the same material (ie, allograft putty) was utilized in three different types of defects.

When lesions are intraosseous, such as an extraction socket, proper containment of the graft material within the alveolar housing is limited only by the area of ingress to the bone, such as the socket entrance. In such situations, graft containment may be achieved in one of several ways. One technique utilizes a biocompatible collagen wound-dressing material over the graft material.⁵⁴ This protects the graft from displacement while at the same time inducing blood-clot formation via platelet aggregation and stabilizing the wound. The collagen material also functions chemotactically to attract fibroblasts and promote wound coverage.^{55,56} If a membrane or collagen sponge is not used to contain the allograft within the defect, the surgeon should attempt to achieve primary closure to prevent displacement of the graft material. In the opinion of the author, this is particularly important when using RegenerOss Allograft Putty (Biomet/3i, Palm Beach Gardens, FL) as a grafting material, as the tactile feeling and taste of the lecithin carrier tends to prompt increased patient tongue habits that could potentially displace the material.

When the graft material must be applied outside the skeletal envelope, space maintenance becomes a concern. The lecithin carrier of the aforementioned allograft putty has some space-maintaining properties, as the successful results seen in Case 2 and 3 attest. In the opinion of the author, however, combining the putty with an osteoconductive graft material is apt to yield even more predictable superior clinical results.

It should be noted that in the two cases reported here in which the regenerated bone was later entered surgically, the bone was judged to be of Type 2 or 3, despite displaying excellent histological results. The explanation for this may lie in the nature of the demineralized allograft material. Even though no statistical difference in percentages of new bone formed has been found between sites grafted with DFDBA versus FDDBA,⁵⁷ significantly less residual bone was documented at the DFDBA-grafted sites. If the mineralized material takes



Figure 11. Intraoperative view of the newly regenerated bone five months after grafting.

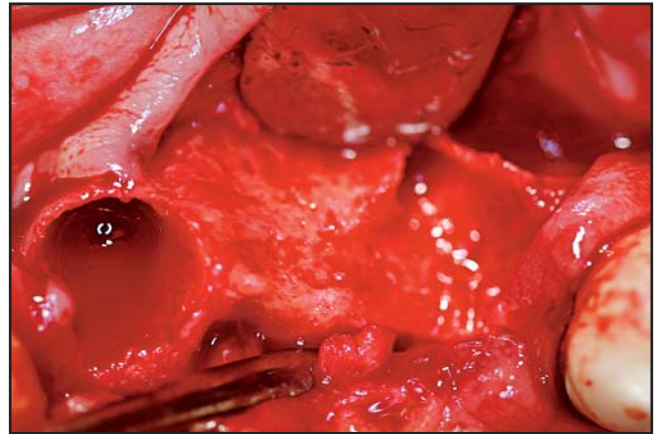


Figure 12. A full-thickness mucoperiosteal flap was reflected, and the maxillary right central incisor and left lateral incisor were extracted, revealing the narrow dimensions of the ridge.

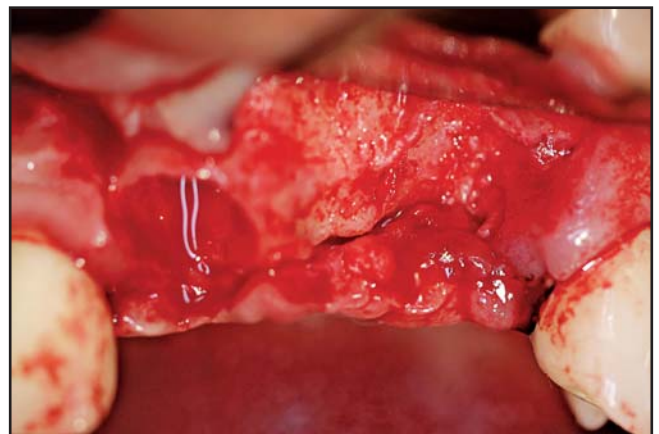


Figure 13. The facial view of the defect revealed vertical alveolar loss in conjunction with the horizontal defect seen in figure 12.

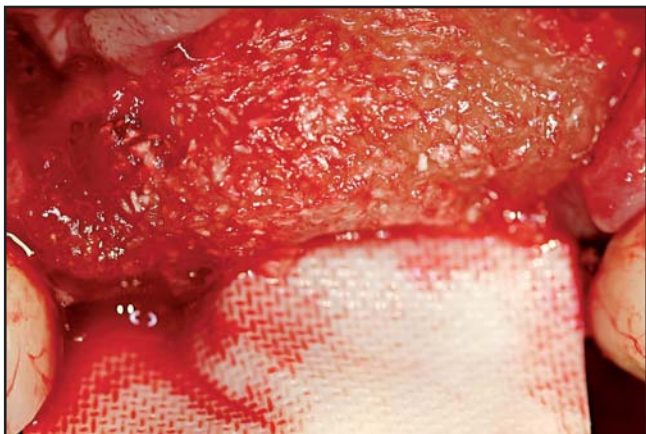


Figure 14. RegenerOss Allograft Putty (Biomet/3i, Palm Beach Gardens, FL) was adapted to the ridge before being covered with a resorbable collagen membrane.

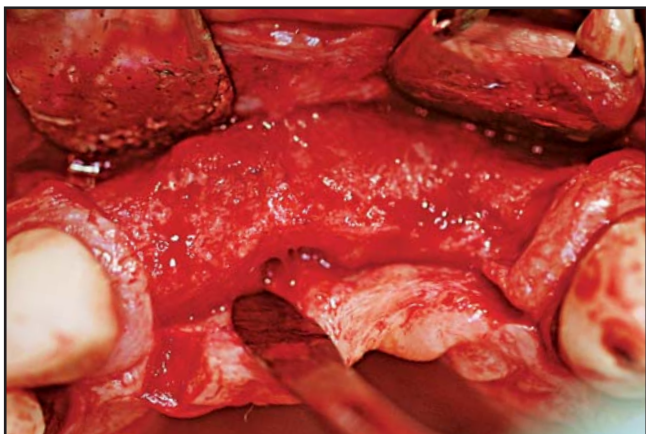


Figure 15. Re-entry after six months demonstrated excellent bone regeneration and an increase in both the vertical and horizontal ridge dimensions.

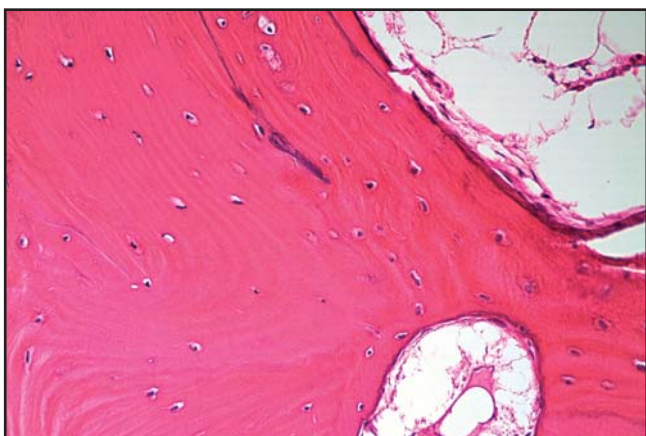


Figure 16. Histology revealed vital bone cells in conjunction with notable woven bone.

longer to resorb, sites regenerated with it might appear to be harder while in fact being no more successful than sites grafted with demineralized material.

Conclusion

The results obtained in the cases presented in this short-term preliminary report indicate that DFDBA combined with a lecithin carrier can be used to successfully augment a variety of deficient alveolar sites. Although the regenerated bone in two of the three cases was Type 2 to 3, histological findings confirmed the development of well-vascularized bone marrow and newly formed bone. While the osteoinductivity of the allograft bone within the putty has been verified via in vitro bioassay, the results of this clinical care report cannot conclusively support the clinical relevance. Future controlled clinical trials are recommended.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses his gratitude to Dr. Joan A. Phelan and Ms. Gloria Turner at the Diagnostic Pathology Laboratory at New York University College of Dentistry for their excellent work and declares that he has received honoraria from Biomet/3i for lectures conducted on the Company's behalf

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