

COMMENTARY

ORTHODONTIC TREATMENT OF A CONGENITALLY MISSING MAXILLARY LATERAL INCISOR

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Dr. Park must be commended for his article on “Orthodontic Treatment of a Congenitally Missing Maxillary Lateral Incisor.” While this topic has been extensively discussed in the literature,¹⁻⁴ it is always refreshing to see a review/case report that emphasizes the importance of an interdisciplinary approach for solving what is often a challenging esthetic malocclusion.

The author’s attention to shape and proportionality of the anterior teeth produced a stable and successful esthetic result for the patient. He outlined steps to achieve the desired results, with modifications to bracket positioning, wire bends, and recontouring of the maxillary canines. With the recent technological advances in orthodontics, including CAD-CAM designed brackets, custom wires bent by robots, and 3-dimensional imaging; it will be interesting to see if these instruments can help assist the orthodontist in producing a more favorable outcome for the patient.

Throughout the article, the author reviewed different options for the treatment of missing maxillary lateral incisors and emphasizes the importance of selecting the appropriate treatment plan(s) to meet the esthetic demands and the malocclusion of the patient. Although the illustrated case in the article involved canine substitution, there are situations in which the opening space for dental implant(s) is more appropriate.

Dental implants are gaining more popularity in dental education and daily clinical practice. In a survey by Armbruster and colleagues,^{5,6} it was reported that general dentists as well as dental specialists preferred implants as the treatment choice for the replacement of congenitally missing maxillary lateral incisors, and cited “esthetics” as the primary reason for their decision. When given photographs of various treatment results, these same dentists did not rank the implant restoration photographs as the best option. It is also interesting to note that the layperson picked the substituted canine as the best option. As dentists, we should eliminate personal opinions on what we believe is the most esthetic choice, but rather present the available options, citing the advantages and disadvantages of each, with respect to the clinical findings of the patient.

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This commentary is accompanied by article, “Orthodontic Treatment of a Congenitally Missing Maxillary Lateral Incisor,” Jae Hyun Park, DMD, MSD, MS, PhD, Sakiko Okadakage, DDS, Yasumori Sato, DDS, PhD, Yutaka Akamatsu, DDS, PhD, Kiyoshi Tai, DDS, DOI 10.1111/j.1708-8240.2010.00356.x

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