Background and aims: Several studies highlighted how the ameloblasts, secretory cells responsible of the tooth enamel formation, are highly sensitive to changes in their environment. Due to enamel maturation, their dysfunctions during a limited period of tooth development may lead to permanent morphological consequences, namely Developmental Enamel Defects (DED). The aim of this study was to show the advantages of Er:YAG laser for DED treatment.

Subjects and methods: The case report presented describes the treatment, by Er:YAG laser, of some DED lesions present in the upper incisors of a young patient. The settings used were: 1W power, 100mJ energy, 10 Hz frequency corresponding to a Fluence of 0.318 J/cm² per pulse or 3, 18 J/cm².

Results: The patient, even in absence of local anesthesia, did not feel any pain or discomfort during and after intervention. Follow-up at 2, 6 and 12 months did not show any problems in an aesthetic point of view as well as regarding hypersensitivity.

Conclusions: The use of Er:YAG laser for the treatment of developmental enamel defects in frontal teeth is a safe, painless and minimally invasive; moreover, it is able to assure a good aesthetic result.

Key words: developmental enamel defects • Er:YAG laser, amelogenesis imperfecta • conservative dentistry • esthetic dentistry.
mental disorder which affects the structure of enamel of all, or nearly all, the teeth in a more or less equal manner and its prevalence has been reported to range from 1.4:1000 to 1:16,000, depending on the population studied.

The stage of enamel formation determines the aspect of the lesion: hypoplastic (thin enamel, surface pitting or vertical grooving), hypo-mineralized (soft enamel), or hypo-mature (mottled/opaque/altered enamel translucency). Hypo-mineralization and hypoplastic defects can coexist in the same patient and even in the same tooth.

All affected teeth are often discolored, creating aesthetic problems in addition to sensitivity, tooth wear, loss of vertical dimension of occlusion, increased calculus formation, and the need for lifelong dental care.

The role of fluoride has been well documented for both of its benefits and detrimental effects on the dentition since long. The detrimental effect caused by fluoride on teeth is usually in the form of dental fluorosis (DF) which is commonly seen as discoloration of teeth. Enamel discoloration in maxillary anterior teeth often raises the esthetic concerns in patients.

The prevalence of children and adolescents with DF ranges between 4% and 70%, with the mild forms being the most common. Mild fluorosis enamel is characterized by narrow, diffuse, poorly demarcated and bilateral white lines and by an increase in the subsurface porosity. The most severe forms may gain a yellow/brown coloration and the enamel may present pre-eruptive or post-eruptive breakdown, which leads to a greater susceptibility to dental caries. DF can occur in both the primary and permanent teeth.

Er:YAG laser represents a good device for conservative use: it is well absorbed by water and hydroxyapatite and, for this reason has a low penetration in the tissues and, consequently, great respect for them.

The aim of this clinical case report is to demonstrate the advantages, in terms of aesthetic results and of minimally invasive technique, observed with the use of Er:YAG laser during the treatment of hypoplastic lesions in the frontal teeth.

Subjects and methods

Clinical case

The patient A.N., a 15 years woman, came to our clinics because of the white spots present on teeth 1.1, 2.1 and 2.2 requiring the correction of her defect causing important aesthetic problems (Fig. 1).

It was decided to remove, by means of Er:YAG laser device, the surface coat of the lesions and to subsequently apply a layer of composite resin; after explaining the technique, the informed consent was signed by the parents, due the youth age of the patient.

The choice of the laser wavelength was oriented by its great absorption by water and hydroxyapatite, and consequently by the possibility to precisely control the removal of dental tissues, so limiting the ablation to the necessary volume and to preserve the healthy enamel.

The LiteTouch laser (Light Instruments, Israel), emitting at 2940 nm, with the handpiece AS7825X and the sapphire tip AS7073X (1.0 x 14 mm) was used.

This is a particular device where the optical resonator is located very close to the handpiece, in this way avoiding the problems related to the delivery system of the laser beam.

The settings used were: 1W power, 100mJ energy, 10 Hz frequency corresponding to a Fluence of 0.318 J/cm².

Fig. 1: Clinical view of the upper incisors with white spots.

Fig. 2: The beginning of laser irradiation.
per pulse or 3.18 J/cm² per second. This low fluence was used to respect the minimal invasiveness of this procedure.

The laser irradiation for removing the hypoplastic enamel (Figs. 2 and 3) performed under an air/water spray, had a duration of 84 seconds and the patient, even in the absence of local anesthesia, did not feel any pain or discomfort.

Orthophosphoric acid was then applied to the treated area and the restoration was completed with composite resin (Fig. 4).

The follow-up at 2, 6 and 12 months did not show any problems in an aesthetic point of view as well as regarding hypersensitivity.

**Discussion**

The treatment of enamel lesions is justified, beyond the necessity to improve the esthetic aspect, also for reducing the possibility of carious lesions further formation.

In fact, Kühnisch and co-workers 17) demonstrated a significant relationship between caries and demarcated hypo-mineralized lesions, including MIH (molar-incisor hypo-mineralization), in the permanent dentition of 15-year-olds.

A possible explanation may be that individuals with demarcated hypo-mineralized lesions (DHL) sensitive molars are more susceptible to carious lesion development as they avoid cleaning their molar teeth appropriately allowing plaque accumulation and increasing caries risk. Another fact could be that the surface of the hypo-mineralized enamel may promote bacterial adhesion; even on ‘intact’ surfaces, the pores’ size is increased which facilitates the invasion by cariogenic bacteria throughout the enamel and dentine, putatively increasing sensitivity 19). Furthermore, teeth with post-eruptive enamel breakdown are at higher risk of lesion development due to the difficulty of cleaning these hypersensitive teeth 19).

In these last years, many kinds of treatment were proposed for enamel defects treatment.

Conservative non restorative methods such as casein-phospho-peptide-amorphous-calcium-phosphate (CPP-ACP) have been mentioned in the literature in treating such discolorations and hypo-mineralized enamel structures 20-22).

Micro-abrasion involves mild acid etching in combination with rotary application of an abrasive component which was first described by Dr. Walter Kane (Colorado Springs, 1916). In this method, the teeth were treated with hydrochloric acid under the alcohol flame aiming to treat enamel fluorosis 23, 24).

The technique was rejected by the clinicians for the reason of damaging or destroying the enamel by such invasive way using strong acid (HCl) and alcohol flame 25, 26). The new modified micro-abrasion method was introduced by McCloskey in 1984 where acid was combined with pumice, hence avoiding the flame and it was named as micro-abrasion by Croll in 1986 27).

The concept behind this less invasive method is based on the stains being present due to the affected outer layers of enamel. These layers if removed or treated can result in a more smooth and glassy enamel surface which is caries resistant than the original enamel.

The recently available re-mineralizing agent CPP-ACP stabilizes a high concentration of calcium and phosphate ions that bind themselves to the available plaque and pellicle 22). Under the acid challenge, the reservoir thus created maintains a supersaturated mineral environment, thereby reducing demineralization and enhances remineralization of enamel. 20) CPP-ACP supplementation has proved to have beneficial effects by re-mineralizing.
the enamel affected by hypoplasia, resulting in an esthetic improvement too. Unfortunately, this technique requires long-term treatment that could last months or years, requiring the patient's cooperation. The technique here proposed is very fast, it may be performed in one only session is painful, low-invasive and allows reaching a very esthetic restoration; moreover, the association of erbium laser and acid etching assures a strong adhesion between composite resin and enamel, so preventing the risk of micro-leakage and consequently, the carious lesions' formation.

Conclusions

The use of Er:YAG laser for the treatment of developmental enamel defects in frontal teeth is a safe, painless and minimally invasive, giving, at the same time, good aesthetic results.

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