



Photos by Leslie Westbrook/lwestbrook@theadvertiser.com

Dr. Craig Landry uses a K-7 jaw tracking system to monitor Carol Blanda's facial muscles.

DRAMATIC DIFFERENCE

Neuromuscular dentistry can relieve chronic pain

Judy Bastien

jbastien@theadvertiser.com

For about 20 years, Carol Blanda has been in pain.

Temporo mandibular jaw pain, better known as TMJ, made it almost impossible for her to touch her own face, in spite of treatment that included wearing a dental splint every day.

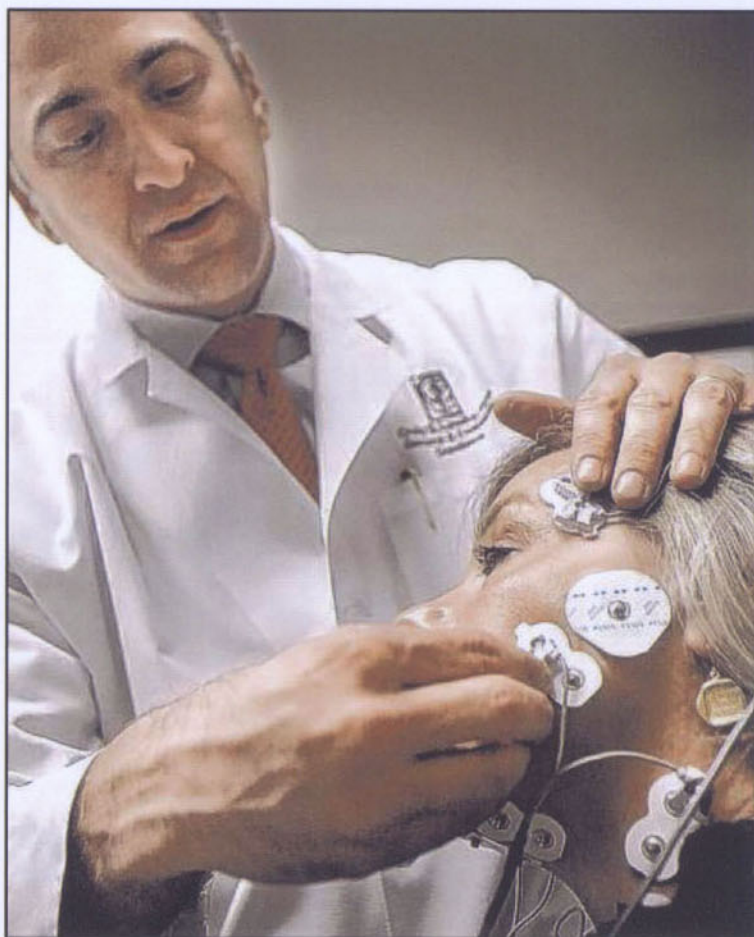
Intense migraines that didn't respond to Imitrex, the powerful migraine medication, sent her to the emergency room about once every four months.

That was before she tried out a new approach to her problem called neuromuscular dentistry.

After treatment, she reports being pain-free for about a year.

Neuromuscular dentistry has been around since the mid-1960s, said dentist Dr. Landry said, but now it has been combined with computer technology that makes it effective in pinpointing the cause of head, neck and face pain.

Landry is one of a handful of dentists in Louisiana trained in



Landry hooks up electrodes attached to a K-7 jaw tracking system.

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Dentist

the practice.

For the most part, his patients are those for whom traditional treatments have failed.

This is especially true for migraine patients who don't get relief from taking migraine medication.

"The term, 'migraine,' has gotten to be over-used a little," Landry said. "What patients may call a migraine, they call it that because it's so painful and they have light sensitivity and nausea." Those are some of the classic symptoms of a migraine.

But, there is no objective way of testing to find out if an excruciatingly painful headache is a true

migraine.

But some severe headaches are caused by misalignment of the teeth, Landry said.

In some cases, the trigeminal nerve may be the culprit.

"It's the nerve that supplies the teeth and many muscles of the head and neck," Landry said. "A bad bite can over-stimulate the trigeminal system."

The cause of the pain is often the tensing of muscles that are trying to compensate for the misaligned bite, Landry said.

A perfect smile doesn't necessarily mean the teeth are not misaligned, Landry said.

Blanda wore braces as a young adult, giving her picture-perfect teeth.

"Conventional orthodontics lines teeth up aesthetically," Landry said.



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Carol Blanda is treated at Landry's office.

"The main thing for people to know is that just because they've had orthodontics, it doesn't mean the muscles are comfortable in the tooth position that has been created."

The problem muscles are pinpointed through electrodes that feed information into a computer, which also tells the dentist how the teeth should be positioned.

The patient then undergoes therapy with a TENS unit, which uses electrical impulses to relax the muscles.

Next, the patient is fitted with an orthotic dental appliance that is worn over the natural teeth. The device has sculpted teeth that hold the jaw in proper alignment during chewing.

When the patient reports having no more pain — usually in about

three months — a permanent solution is executed. In mild cases, the teeth may be "polished" or shaved down minutely to strike their counterparts correctly.

In most cases, patients are referred to an orthodontist who fits them with braces that re-align the teeth in accordance with Landry's recommendations.

Blanda's case called for a third option — porcelain crowns were placed over her existing teeth to reshape them to strike correctly.

It has made a dramatic difference" The miracle was that I don't have any facial pain," Blanda said during a post-treatment follow-up visit to her dentist, Dr. Craig Landry. "I don't have migraines, anymore and my ears don't ring — and I can touch my face."