

Chapter 15

LASER APPLICATIONS ON ORAL SOFT TISSUES

Ahu URAZ¹, Sıla Çağrı İŞLER², Burcu KARADUMAN³, Deniz ÇETİNER⁴

Introduction

Laser involves light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation. In 1957, American Physicist Gordon Gould envisaged that light can be amplified by stimulating it like microwaves, and promulgated the light amplification theory that is abbreviated as LASER (Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation). However, the first truly operational laser device could only be produced by American Physicist Theodore Herold Maiman in 1960 (Hecht, 2005). Laser started to be used in medicine and surgery in mid-1960s. The first use of laser in dentistry was for treatment of tooth decay and introduced by Goldman et al. (Goldman & et al., 1964). Later, Yamamoto and Sato used neodymium-doped yttrium aluminium garnet (Nd:YAG) laser, and Melcer et al. used carbon dioxide (CO₂) laser on hard dental tissues (Yamamoto& Sato, 1980; Melcer & et al., 1985).

Lasers and Their Characteristics

Light is a form of electromagnetic energy that is composed of massless sub-atomic particles called photons and has electrical and magnetic field components. The most important properties of light are wavelength, frequency and intensity (Gribbin, 2000).

Warm white light generated by a source of light emits an unfocused, diffused radiation. It is visible to human eye and comprised of a combination of multiple colors in the color spectrum. On the other hand, lasers generate a narrow, intensive, in-phase and monochromatic light, and the light emitted by a laser source is totally different from conventional light (Gribbin, 2000).

Its properties are as follows:

1. It is monochromatic (single color). It has a specific wavelength.
2. The beam is coherent. Each photon is synchronized with other photons and scatters a little in the medium.
3. The light is unidirectional. According to distance, the beam angle changes little.
4. Beams are small in diameter but hold a high amount of energy.

¹Doç. Dr., Gazi Üniversitesi, Diş Hekimliği Fakültesi, ahuuraz@gazi.edu.tr

²Dr., Gazi Üniversitesi, Diş Hekimliği Fakültesi, silaisler@gazi.edu.tr

³Doç. Dr., Biruni Üniversitesi, Diş Hekimliği Fakültesi, bkaraduman@biruni.edu.tr

⁴Prof. Dr., Gazi Üniversitesi, Diş Hekimliği Fakültesi, fdeniz@gazi.edu.tr

mechanical periodontal treatment. In conclusion, this chapter reports potentially useful aspects of laser applications, which offer a fairly novel treatment option, with regard to periodontal regeneration. In this respect, large-scale clinical studies as well as studies for understanding the effect mechanisms are necessary.

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