A Novel Surgical Approach to Modify the Periodontal Phenotype for the Prevention of Mucogingival Complications Related to Orthodontic Treatment

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Certain bone morphologies and soft tissue thickness (ie, phenotype) are considered to be risk factors for the development of gingival recessions following orthodontic tooth movement. Preoperative evaluation of the periodontal phenotype, in the frame of orthodontic treatment plan, identify teeth at high risk for mucogingival complications related to orthodontic therapy. The new surgical technique is illustrated in a clinical case. A patient with a thin phenotype without visible gingival recession had bone dehiscences in the anterior mandible. Prior to orthodontic treatment, simultaneous bone and soft tissue augmentation was performed using the combination of a highly cross-linked ribose porcine type I collagen membrane and a subepithelial palatal connective tissue graft. Two years after augmentation surgery and initiation of orthodontic treatment, a thick buccal tissue with a wide band of attached gingiva was observed without any clinical signs of root prominences, indicating a substantial change in periodontal phenotype. The clinical findings were corroborated by the 3D analysis, demonstrating substantial bone apposition on the buccal aspect of all roots in the treated area. The described surgical technique offers a valuable approach for regenerating hard and soft tissues in deficient areas prior to orthodontic therapy, thus preventing the development of gingival recessions. Int J Periodontics Restorative Dent 2021;41:811–817. doi: 10.11607/prd.5774

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The term periodontal phenotype refers to the characteristics of the bone and its overlying gingival phenotype, including keratinized tissue width and gingival and mucosal tissue thickness.1 Alveolar bone dehiscence2 and alveolar mucosa thickness3,4 are considered to be factors contributing to the development of gingival recessions. Orthodontic tooth movement changes the buccal or lingual tooth position, thus potentially causing or worsening alveolar bone defects such as dehiscences or fenestrations, affecting periodontal support.5,6 Retrospective studies analyzing the possible effect of orthodontic treatment on the development of gingival recessions indicate mandibular incisors to be more prone to developing gingival recession.7,8 These teeth demonstrate a high prevalence of alveolar bone defects.9

Bone augmentation techniques were suggested to enhance buccolingual dimensions of the anterior portion of the ridge prior to orthodontic tooth movement.10,11 Soft tissue augmentation is performed after orthodontic treatment.

In 2007, a porcine type I collagen membrane, cross-linked with ribose, was histologically proven to undergo ossification when placed over an intact bone surface in a preclinical investigation.12 Similar findings of ongoing ossification have been observed in humans.13
This current case report presents a surgical technique designed to prevent mucogingival complications following orthodontic tooth movement. An ossifying collagen membrane, fixed directly on bone, is combined with a subepithelial connective tissue graft, thus enabling bone and soft tissue augmentation, changing the periodontal phenotype.

**Case Description**

A 28-year-old woman with noncontributory medical history was referred to a periodontist 2 weeks after placement of orthodontic appliances. The patient arrived with a full set of periapical radiographs indicating no sign of interproximal bone loss. The periodontal examination indicated a stable periodontal condition, with periodontal pocket depth (PPD) < 4 mm, a plaque score of 14%, and a bleeding score of 16%. The clinical appearance of the mandibular anterior area demonstrated prominent roots ("wash board" appearance), indicating possible alveolar bone defects. The overlaying gingiva had a thin phenotype (Fig 1) and a narrow band of keratinized tissue, especially on the central incisors and canines. Subsequent to the clinical evaluation, a CBCT scan was performed to evaluate bone morphology (Fig 2). The bone imaging results and the clinical examination led to a periodontal-orthodontic consultation. Considering the planned direction of tooth movements, preparatory surgery was planned to augment hard and soft tissues. In the 3-week interval between the initial examination and the day of surgery, recession had already begun on the right lateral incisor (Fig 1b).

**Surgical Procedure**

A full-thickness mucoperiosteal buccal flap was elevated with two vertical releasing incisions to gain an adequate exposure to the surgical field and avoid any tension. The elevated flap was split at its base, separating the periosteum from the overlying mucosa (Fig 3). Bone dehiscence over the involved roots was confirmed. Subsequently, a 1.5-mm-thick palatal subepithelial connective tissue graft (SCTG) was harvested by means of the single incision technique, and closure of the donor site was performed using modified mattress sutures. After mechanical debridement of the exposed roots, the roots were rinsed with sterile saline. A 1 × 4 × 2-mm crossed-linked membrane (OSSIX Volumax, Datum Dental) was sutured to the exposed root surfaces using internal cross-mattress sutures, with a 5/0 polyglactin resorbable suture (Coated Vicryl, Ethicon, Johnson & Johnson) extending from the inner periosteal flap to the lingual papillae (Fig 4). The SCTG was adapted on the cross-linked membrane at the level of the cementoenamel junction using a 6/0 polyglycolic acid resorbable sling suture (Stoma PGA, Stoma; Fig 5). Finally, the buccal flap was coronally repositioned over the graft and membrane, then sutured with 6/0 nylon sling sutures (Nylon, Ethicon, Johnson & Johnson) and single interrupted 5/0 polytetrafluoroethylene sutures (OsseoGuard, Zimmer Biomet) to accomplish tension-free complete coverage of the graft and denuded roots. The vertical incisions were also sutured using 6/0 nylon sutures by applying simple interrupted sutures (Fig 6).
Fig 2 (a) CBCT scans taken of the mandibular arch. (b) Anterior teeth sections taken at the beginning of therapy to evaluate bone morphology in 3D.

Fig 3 A full-thickness buccal flap was reflected. The elevated flap was split at its base, separating the periosteum and muscle insertions from the overlying mucosa.

Fig 4 A ribose-crossed linked membrane adapted to the exposed root surfaces using internal cross-mattress sutures.
Postoperative Care

Postoperatively, the patient was prescribed analgesics (400 mg ibuprofen [Ibufen, Dexcel] twice a day for 2 to 3 days) and antibiotics (500 mg amoxicillin [Moxypen Forte, Teva] for 7 days) to prevent infection. The patient was instructed to avoid toothbrushing of the surgical sites for 21 days postoperatively and was advised to use a 0.2% chlorhexidine-digluconate mouth rinse (Corsodyl, GlaxoSmithKline) twice a day for 1 minute for the first 21 days postsurgery. The patient resumed toothbrushing 21 days after surgery. The palatal sutures were removed 7 days after surgery, while those from the treated teeth were removed 21 days postoperatively. At that time, the patient was instructed to perform mechanical cleaning of the surgical site using an ultra-soft electric toothbrush (Smart 4000S, Oral-B). Periodontal recall appointments included professional supragingival tooth debridement every 2 months.

Two years postsurgery, the CBCT indicated substantial buccal bone apposition (Fig 7). The clinical evaluation revealed a stable thick buccal tissue with a wide band of attached gingiva without any signs of root prominences (Fig 8).

Orthodontic Treatment

Two mandibular first premolars were extracted prior to orthodontic treatment to enable upright positioning.
of the proclined mandibular anterior teeth. Orthodontic tooth movement was resumed 2 weeks after surgery at an accelerated pace for 4 months, following the protocol suggested by Wilcko et al,\textsuperscript{11} taking advantage of the transient osteopenia induced by the surgical procedure.\textsuperscript{14} After 24 months of orthodontic tooth movement, orthognathic surgery was performed, including maxillary Lefort I osteotomy with maxillary impaction and 4-mm mandibular advancements using a bilateral sagittal split osteotomy technique.\textsuperscript{15}

### Treatment Results

The orthodontic treatment enabled coordination of the two arches and established an overjet in accordance with the orthosurgical plan (maxillary impaction and advancement of the mandible). Despite the limited buccolingual bone volume at the start of orthodontic tooth movement, the clinical parameters monitored throughout the course of the treatment indicated periodontal stability. PPD was unchanged (< 4 mm), and the plaque and bleeding scores did not exceed 20\% throughout the entire treatment period. The change in gingival phenotype obtained by means of the surgical augmentation was stable during the entire duration of orthodontic tooth movement, without any signs of gingival recession (Fig 9).

### Discussion

Periodontal evaluation of patients prior to orthodontic tooth movement usually relates to the presence
or absence of periodontal disease and inflammation and should also include anatomical considerations. Despite the well-established anatomical risk factors for the development of recessions related to orthodontic tooth movement (such as bone morphology, gingival thickness, and muscle pull), there are no established protocols to evaluate the risk of recessions following orthodontic tooth movements. Final tooth inclination is often overlooked in the preorthodontic risk assessment. There is a clear tendency to treat gingival recessions after their development and not as a preventive treatment.

Alveolar bone morphology plays an important role in proper planning of orthodontic treatment, as it might limit tooth movement. Lack of bone support on the buccal aspect of the roots might lead to mucogingival deformities. Alveolar bone defects may develop or worsen after orthodontic tooth movement. Two-dimensional radiographs do not have the ability to reflect buccal bone morphology. Therefore, 3D radiographs, such as CBCT scans, are recommended prior to orthodontic tooth movement. A majority of the techniques suggested for the prevention of mucogingival complications following orthodontic tooth movement are related to hard tissue augmentation. Different bone augmentation techniques were suggested to enhance buccolingual dimensions of the anterior ridge prior to orthodontic tooth movement. The most established technique is the periodontally accelerated osteogenic orthodontics (PAOO) introduced by Wilcko et al, which combines selective alveolar bone decortication and bone augmentation with particulate grafting material. Interestingly, it was reported that bone augmentation following PAOO enhanced keratinized tissue width, demonstrating the essential reciprocal relations between bone and soft tissue dimensions. Alveolar bone morphology is not frequently discussed as a factor potentially influencing the treatment plan and outcomes in mucogingival cases, but it might contribute to short-term complications and long-term stability of treatment. These teeth might be at further risk if covered by thin soft tissue, typical in the mandibular anterior area.

The 3D architecture of the tissues was evaluated in the present study, considering the planned direction of tooth movement to formulate a combined periodontal-orthodontic treatment plan. This offered a surgical approach for simultaneous enhancement of bone and gingival tissues using a combination of an ossifying ribose cross-linked collagen membrane and a connective tissue graft. A highly cross-linked ribose porcine type I collagen membrane was introduced in 2007 for guided bone regeneration procedures. Histologic analysis of a preclinical investigation demonstrated that the membrane underwent total ossification within 6 months. Despite the fact that the ossification mechanisms have not been explored yet, analysis of the histologic sections over time (ie, at 2, 4, and 6 months) revealed direct apposition of the calcified material on the original glycated, cross-linked collagen matrix. This direct mineral apposition on the glycated collagen was further confirmed in humans.

The postoperative CBCT scan in the present case supports the bone formation enhanced by the use of this ossifying membrane. Combining bone augmentation with soft tissue augmentation in the same procedure enabled a change in the periodontal phenotype. The induction of the transient osteopenia and bone remodeling derived from the surgical procedure are probably responsible for the formation of a wide bony envelope for tooth movement, simultaneously preserving periodontal stability.

Conclusions

The present case treatment highlights the advantages of a combined periodontic-orthodontic consultation, and of thorough clinical and radiographic analyses prior to orthodontic tooth movement, to design the optimal treatment strategy that avoids possible mucogingival complications. The described surgical technique appears to offer a valuable approach for regenerating hard and soft tissues in deficient areas prior to orthodontic therapy, thus preventing the development of gingival recessions. Long-term follow-up studies and comparative studies are needed to further establish the advantages of the presented technique.
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