Dr. Thomas Grams, 51, an American dentist who had been working with humanitarian relief organizations for the past five years to provide free dental care in Afghanistan, was among a group of aid workers killed in an attack by the Taliban in August.

Dr. Grams had given up his dental practice in Durango, Colo., to work full time in the war-torn county.

A total of 10 medical relief volunteers — six Americans, two Afghans, a German and a Briton — were killed in the attack, which drew widespread media attention. The incident was covered on major network news broadcasts, and Grams’ picture was printed on the front page of The New York Times along with the other slain workers.

The group had spent two weeks treating villagers in a remote valley in northern Afghanistan before being ambushed by Taliban extremists on their way back to Kabul, according to published reports.

“Dr. Tom humbly served the men, women and children of Afghanistan, working tirelessly to provide dental care to those who would not otherwise be able to reach medical clinics,” Khris Nedam, founder of Kids 4 Afghan Kids, a humanitarian aid organization with whom Grams worked, told Dental Tribune.

“Dr. Tom loved his work and cheerfully brought hope to rural areas, showing them that someone cared enough about them to reach out and help. He used his professional skills to build bridges in some of the most difficult, rural areas,” Nedam said. “In return he was loved and respected by all and will be sadly missed by everyone.”

Tim Grams, Grams’ twin brother, told news organizations that his brother started traveling with relief organizations to Afghanistan, Nepal, Guatemala and India several years ago. After he sold his practice, Grams started going several months at a time, his brother said.

“He was shocked by the dental condition of the villagers,” Nedam said in an online posting. “In one of our first conversations during his first visit he wondered if the children ate a lot of sugar. I replied no, their teeth are in such bad condition because of lack of dental care and malnutrition.”

“Dr. Tom worked to teach the children how to brush their teeth and worked out a system to use his drills more efficiently given the limited amount of electricity,” Nedam wrote. “He spoke to groups about his work in Afghanistan raising funds and organizing dental supplies to take with him. He also collected and transported hundreds of toothbrushes for the village families and at the same time, a desire grew within him to help the village in ways other than dental care.”

In addition to Grams, the slain aid workers also included Dr. Tom Little, an optometrist from Delmar, N.Y.; Glen Lapp, a nurse from Lancaster, Pa.; and Cheryl Beckett, an expert in nutritional gardening and mother-child health from Knoxville, Tenn.

“We are heartbroken by the loss of these heroic, generous people,” said U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who condemned the Taliban for the deaths.

“Dr. Tom’s life truly represents servanthood and caring, as his work touched so many lives,” Nedam told Dental Tribune.
Researchers say the best teeth whitener is fruit

A recent study by Harvard University revealed that eating fruit daily is the best way to whiten teeth. Through a three-month clinical study, it was determined that strawberries, orange peels and lemon juice are the most effective teeth whiteners in the world. Strawberries can be made into a puree and smothered on the teeth. Strawberries have a natural enzyme that removes tooth stains, according to teethwhitener.net. Orange peels can be used to remove tooth stains, just by rubbing the inside of a peel against tooth surfaces. A little lemon juice and salt work very well to remove stains. Just wash your mouth out with this or even rock very well to remove stains. Just wash surfaces. It is best to not drink coffee, tea, colas or red wine, which are all known to stain teeth and cause some decay of the enamel. Apples and potatoes can cause discoloration, but they also tend to clean off the teeth. Mouth washing is important after eating apples.

Baking soda has long been known to work wonders for smiles. It may taste awful, however adding baking soda on a toothbrush along with mouthwash can help alleviate the negative taste. Also a strawberry mixture added to baking soda/peroxide not only adds a sweet taste to the concoction, but is yet another effective whitener. It is best to not drink coffee, tea, colas or red wine, which are all known to stain teeth and cause some decay of the enamel. Apples and potatoes can cause discoloration, but they also tend to clean off the teeth. Tooth brushing is important after eating apples. Also, stop or slow down tobacco use, as both dipping and smoking can cause tooth discoloration. Avoid mouthwash, as it sometimes will stain teeth. Finally, remind patients that an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure. Going to the dentist once or twice a year for a cleaning and checkup is strongly suggested.