Surgical predictability of vertical GBR in the posterior mandible

Flap design, management and passivation of soft tissues as principal keys for success

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The effectiveness of guided bone regeneration (GBR), a technique used to promote horizontal or vertical bone regeneration, has been well-documented since the early 1990s. The stability of the regenerated bone and its positive response in time, once functioning, has also been well-demonstrated.

Vertical GBR is a technique with great potential but one that requires both the precise adherence to surgical protocols and application by operators with the appropriate knowledge and manual skills to ensure optimum management of soft tissues. In addition to achieving primary closure of the flaps, maintaining this closure during the entire period necessary for the formation and maturation of the new bone is a pre-requisite for the avoidance of membrane exposure, which inevitably leads not only to bacterial contamination but, nearly always, to the impairment of the surgical procedure of regeneration.

Numerous studies have described various clinical protocols regarding the management of soft tissues in both the upper and lower arches.

This retrospective analysis describes the surgical technique of the management of soft tissues applied during GBR with non-resorbable membranes in 127 cases of vertical defects of the posterior mandible and evaluates the clinical results obtained.

Materials and techniques

Between 2000 and 2012, a total of 127 cases of vertical bone defects in edentulous posterior mandibles were treated with the use of GBR with non-resorbable membranes.

The technique was applied by following a surgical protocol, which has undergone few variations during the years.

From 2000 to 2008, expanded polytetrafluoroethylene (e-PTFE) titanium-reinforced non-resorbable membranes (Gore-Tex TR9, W.L. Gore & Associates, Flagstaff, Ariz.) were used as a barrier device in 72 cases (Fig. 1).

From 2009 to 2012, high-density polytetrafluoroethylene (d-PTFE) titanium-reinforced non-resorbable membranes (Cytoplast Ti250XL, Osteogenics Biomedical, Lubbock, Texas) were used as a barrier device in 55 cases (Fig. 2).

All the membranes were fixed mesially and distally on the lingual side with the use of titanium pins (Helmut Zepf Medizintechnik, Settlingen, Germany) or mini-screws (Pro-Fix, Osteogenics Biomedical, Lubbock, Texas) as a barrier device in 55 cases (Fig. 2).