Removal of a fractured instrument: Two case reports

Author_ Dr Rafaël Michiels, Belgium

_Fractured instruments pose_ a challenge to every endodontist. The difficulty in the retrieval of these instruments ranges from surprisingly easy to downright impossible. The clinical outcome of cases with fractured instruments depends on several factors, such as the position of the instrument in the canal, the type of material, the instrument size and canal anatomy.¹ Failure in retrieval of the fractured instrument does not automatically result in failure of the case.² One can still try to bypass the instrument, choose a surgical approach, or even wait and see. However, if we bear ‘nothing ventured, nothing gained’ in mind, then we should always at least try to retrieve the fractured instrument.

_Case I_

A 27-year-old female patient was referred to our practice. She was in good health and had an American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) score of 1. The patient had some mild clinical symptoms on tooth #30 due to apical periodontitis. She had been told, by the referring dentist, that there was a fractured instrument in her tooth and that the instrument had to be removed first in order to allow for decent retreatment.

Before starting with the treatment, a new diagnostic radiograph was taken. In this case, the diag-
Under the patronage of
H. H. Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum
Deputy Ruler of Dubai, Minister of Finance
President of the Dubai Health Authority

15th Anniversary

“Delivering Science & Technology”

UAE INTERNATIONAL DENTAL CONFERENCE & ARAB DENTAL EXHIBITION

“Where Oral Health Professionals Meet”

- Keep up to date with the newest developments and techniques in dentistry through a series of lectures and specialized courses
- Enhance your dental practice with various management and clinical workshops
- Learn the optimal prevention and treatment services in the field of dental traumatology
- Visit 20,000 sqm. of exhibition space and explore the latest innovations and business practices
- Enjoy a panoramic view from Burj Khalifa, the world’s tallest tower
- Ride the Metro and see Dubai!

Organised by
INDEX®

Strategic Partner

Supported by

INDEX® Conferences & Exhibitions Organisation Est.
P.O. Box: 13636 | Ibn Sina Bldg. #27 Block B, Office 203, Dubai Healthcare City | Dubai - United Arab Emirates
Tel: +971 4 3624717 | Fax: +971 4 3624718 | E-mail: aeedc@index.ae | Website: www.index.ae
radiograph (Fig. 1) showed not one but two broken instruments in the mesial root, one in each mesial canal. Thereafter, the tooth was isolated with the rubber dam and the coronal filling was removed. Straight-line access was established, as this is imperative in order to be able to reach and see the fractured instruments. Gates-Glidden burs (DENTSPLY Maillefer) were used to enlarge the mesial orifices coronally.

After reaching the instrument in the mesio-buccal canal, I modified a size 3 Gates-Glidden bur by removing the tip of the bur (Fig. 2). In this manner, one gains an aggressive bur that allows one to create a platform above the instrument. At this moment, the instrument could be clearly visualised (Fig. 3). Ultrasonic tips (DENTSPLY Maillefer), both zirconium nitride and titanium, were used for this purpose.

One-and-a-half hours after starting the treatment, the fragment had been loosened but was still stuck in the canal. We decided to leave it in place for the time being and made a new appointment. Calcium hydroxide paste (UltraCal XS, Ultradent) was put into the coronal part of the mesial canals and the tooth was sealed with glass-ionomer cement (Fuji IX GP Fast, GC) and a cotton pellet.

During the next visit, the tooth was again isolated and opened. The calcium hydroxide paste was removed, using 10% citric acid and passive ultrasonics with the IRRISAFE tip (Satelec). Again, ultrasonics were used to retrieve the instrument. After five minutes, the fragment in the mesio-buccal canal was removed. Another five minutes later, the instrument in the mesio-lingual canal was also removed. While removing the instrument in the mesio-buccal canal was very time-consuming, removing the instrument from the mesio-lingual canal was surprisingly easy. This clearly highlights the above-mentioned difficulty range of instrument retrieval.

After reaching the instrument in the mesio-buccal canal, I modified a size 3 Gates-Glidden bur by removing the tip of the bur (Fig. 2). In this manner, one gains an aggressive bur that allows one to create a platform above the instrument. At this moment, the instrument could be clearly visualised (Fig. 3). Ultrasonic tips (DENTSPLY Maillefer), both zirconium nitride and titanium, were used for this purpose.

One-and-a-half hours after starting the treatment, the fragment had been loosened but was still stuck in the canal. We decided to leave it in place for the time being and made a new appointment. Calcium hydroxide paste (UltraCal XS, Ultradent) was put into the coronal part of the mesial canals and the tooth was sealed with glass-ionomer cement (Fuji IX GP Fast, GC) and a cotton pellet.

During the next visit, the tooth was again isolated and opened. The calcium hydroxide paste was removed, using 10% citric acid and passive ultrasonics with the IRRISAFE tip (Satelec). Again, ultrasonics were used to retrieve the instrument. After five minutes, the fragment in the mesio-buccal canal was removed. Another five minutes later, the instrument in the mesio-lingual canal was also removed. While removing the instrument in the mesio-buccal canal was very time-consuming, removing the instrument from the mesio-lingual canal was surprisingly easy. This clearly highlights the above-mentioned difficulty range of instrument retrieval.

After reaching the instrument in the mesio-buccal canal, I modified a size 3 Gates-Glidden bur by removing the tip of the bur (Fig. 2). In this manner, one gains an aggressive bur that allows one to create a platform above the instrument. At this moment, the instrument could be clearly visualised (Fig. 3). Ultrasonic tips (DENTSPLY Maillefer), both zirconium nitride and titanium, were used for this purpose.

One-and-a-half hours after starting the treatment, the fragment had been loosened but was still stuck in the canal. We decided to leave it in place for the time being and made a new appointment. Calcium hydroxide paste (UltraCal XS, Ultradent) was put into the coronal part of the mesial canals and the tooth was sealed with glass-ionomer cement (Fuji IX GP Fast, GC) and a cotton pellet.

During the next visit, the tooth was again isolated and opened. The calcium hydroxide paste was removed, using 10% citric acid and passive ultrasonics with the IRRISAFE tip (Satelec). Again, ultrasonics were used to retrieve the instrument. After five minutes, the fragment in the mesio-buccal canal was removed. Another five minutes later, the instrument in the mesio-lingual canal was also removed. While removing the instrument in the mesio-buccal canal was very time-consuming, removing the instrument from the mesio-lingual canal was surprisingly easy. This clearly highlights the above-mentioned difficulty range of instrument retrieval.

After reaching the instrument in the mesio-buccal canal, I modified a size 3 Gates-Glidden bur by removing the tip of the bur (Fig. 2). In this manner, one gains an aggressive bur that allows one to create a platform above the instrument. At this moment, the instrument could be clearly visualised (Fig. 3). Ultrasonic tips (DENTSPLY Maillefer), both zirconium nitride and titanium, were used for this purpose.

One-and-a-half hours after starting the treatment, the fragment had been loosened but was still stuck in the canal. We decided to leave it in place for the time being and made a new appointment. Calcium hydroxide paste (UltraCal XS, Ultradent) was put into the coronal part of the mesial canals and the tooth was sealed with glass-ionomer cement (Fuji IX GP Fast, GC) and a cotton pellet.

During the next visit, the tooth was again isolated and opened. The calcium hydroxide paste was removed, using 10% citric acid and passive ultrasonics with the IRRISAFE tip (Satelec). Again, ultrasonics were used to retrieve the instrument. After five minutes, the fragment in the mesio-buccal canal was removed. Another five minutes later, the instrument in the mesio-lingual canal was also removed. While removing the instrument in the mesio-buccal canal was very time-consuming, removing the instrument from the mesio-lingual canal was surprisingly easy. This clearly highlights the above-mentioned difficulty range of instrument retrieval.
scraped with Micro-Debriders (DENTSPLY Maillefer) in order to remove the last remnants of gutta-percha. All canals were shaped to a size 40.06 ProFile. Final apical shaping was performed with K-Flexo-files (DENTSPLY Maillefer). Smear-layer removal was carried out by irrigating the canal with 10% citric acid. A final wash of the canal was performed with sterile saline. Tapered gutta-percha cones were then fitted (Fig. 4) and tug-back was confirmed. Topseal (DENTSPLY Maillefer) was used as a root-canal sealer.

Obturation was performed according to the continuous wave of condensation technique with the Elements Obturation Unit (SybronEndo). After obturation (Fig. 5), a temporary restoration of glass-ionomer cement was placed (Fuji IX GP Fast). Final radiographs (Figs. 6 & 7) were taken, both parallel and angled. The radiographs show two completely separated mesial canals; hence, instrument removal in both canals was favourable. The prognosis of this case was good and the patient was referred to her general dentist for a definitive coronal restoration.

**Case II**

A 19-year-old male patient was referred to our practice. He was in good health and had an ASA score of 1. The referring dentist had fractured a small instrument—most likely a size 10 or 15 K-file,
The fractured instrument was retrieved (Fig. 10) and after determining working length (Fig. 11), shaping with rotary nickel-titanium instruments (Twisted Files, SybronEndo) was started. Both canals were shaped to a size 25.08 Twisted File. The master apical file was kept small due to the deep split (Fig. 12) and the tension felt while shaping, thus minimising new instrument fracture. Apical finishing was carried out with size 25 K-flexofiles. Smear-layer removal was performed with a rinse of 10% citric acid. A final wash of the canal was carried out with sterile saline. Tapered gutta-percha cones were then fitted and tug-back was confirmed (Fig. 13). Topseal was used as a root-canal sealer. Both canals were obturated according to the continuous wave of condensation technique with the Elements Obturation Unit. After obturation (Figs. 14 & 15), a temporary restoration in glass-ionomer cement was placed together with a cotton pellet, which was soaked in an alcohol and chlorhexidine mixture first and then air-dried after it had been placed in the access cavity. Final radiographs (Figs. 16 & 17) were taken, both parallel and angled. The prognosis of this case was good and the patient was referred to his general dentist for a definitive coronal restoration.

**Conclusion**

In the end, removal of a fractured instrument can be very difficult and it may take a long time to accomplish. Dr Marga Ree once said on the ROOTS forum that she was being taught that endodontics is all about the three Ps: Passion, Persistence and Patience. This hits the nail right on the head as far as instrument retrieval is concerned.

**Editorial note:** A list of references is available from the publisher.

**Fig. 14** Apical obturation with gutta-percha.
**Fig. 15** The pulp chamber after complete obturation with gutta-percha.
**Fig. 16** Final radiograph (parallel).
**Fig. 17** Final radiograph (angled).

---

**Dr Rafaël Michiels**

graduated from the Department of Dentistry at Ghent University, Belgium, in 2006. In 2009, he completed the three-year postgraduate programme in Endodontics at the University of Ghent. He works in two private practices limited to Endodontics in Belgium. He can be contacted at rafael.michiels@gmail.com and via his website www.ontzenuwen.be.