The most ideal outcome of an endodontic treatment is hard tissue closure, which permanently separates the root canal content — the root filling — from the periapical tissues and prevents chronic irritation and foreign body reactions by material components. Good instrumentation and cleaning of root canal combined with perfect hermetic closure of its apical third are decisive preconditions for achieving of full closure of root canal apical orifice with cementoid tissue. Closure of the root canal in this way ensures non-problematic and long-term function of the root in naturally wet environment surrounding it.

Today's "golden" standard for endodontic treatment are warm condensation multi phase (gutta-percha — sealer) techniques. These techniques, however, result in a friction fit, "cork-in-the-bottle" type sealing only. In the era of adhesive techniques in dentistry we have an endodontic standard, which lacks adhesion and chemical bond between root canal dentin walls and root canal filling materials. Visualization of sealer "puff" in periapical space on radiography does not give enough grounds to say that seemingly adequate root canal filling is an absolute guarantee of successful healing result. Shrinking of gutta-percha after the end of warm condensation and lack of adhesion of the root filling materials to dentinal root canal walls are factors creating enough predispositions for micro leakage. The known fact is that the human body's immune system can easily deal with this situation when titer of microorganisms is low. That capability of immune system is demonstrated by lack of periapical pathology and subjective complaints. This equilibrium can easily be destroyed when due to different reasons human body's reactivity is changed and existing balance is "pushed" toward appearance of pathologic periapical changes.

That is why the quest for endodontic sealers that adhesively and chemically bond to root canal walls continues. Clinical use of Bis-GMA based sealers in combination with polycaprolactone made cones is a promising step ahead, but in the area of the root canal apical third these materials are in constant contact with wet environment of periodontium and are subjected to action of enzyme systems there. Reported data about alkaline and enzyme hydrolysis of polycaprolactone and the shrinkage of Bis-GMA based sealer question the long-term stability of apical third hermetic seal achieved by these endodontic sealers.

"Endodontic grafting"

Filling of the root canal apical third must be looked upon separately from the filling of the rest of the canal having under consideration the active and constant metabolic processes occurring in the periapical area. Special attention must be paid to the interface formed between dentinal root canal walls, gutta-percha and sealer on one side and periodontium and body fluids on the other side. Long-term hermetic sealing of apical third achieved in constantly wet environment is an obligatory condition to ensure lack of microbial growth. Another extremely important factor promoting hard tissue closure of the canal is presence of osseoconductivity as sealer's feature. Perfect and lasting in wet environment hermetic seal of apical third combined with osseoconductivity of endodontic sealer ensure
Sealers for 'endodontic grafting'

Endodontic sealers that set hard and are stable in constantly wet environment are:

- Recently created calcium — silicate — phosphate-based bioceramic nano-compositions — BioAggregate, iRoot SP and iRoot BP (IBC, Canada).
- MTA-based products — “MTA - Angelus” (ANGELUS, Brazil), ProRoot (Dentsply, USA), Aureoseal (OGNA, Italy).

The common feature of all these products is that when used to fill the apical third of the root canal, they guarantee adhesive hermetic seal. They do not get destroyed during their hardening and afterward while being constantly in contact with the wet periapical environment. They are very stable in time. Ceramic-based sealers ensure much better apical seal than IRM, amalgam or Super EBA materials, and this excellent based sealers ensure much better apical seal than IRM, from this point on, there are two different approaches:

A. "Coronal reservoir" is filled directly with ready-to-use material packed into syringes (iRoot SP or iRoot BP). Mini applicators included in the package are used for direct filling of reservoir with factory premixed material.

B. Powder-like ceramic material (MTA or bioceramic-based BioAggregate) is mixed with distilled water to form a paste with suitable viscosity to allow carrying it into the "reservoir" by plastic carrier designed by the author. Micro applicator handle, with "fluffy" head cut, may be used instead, too, (Fig. 2).

The dentist can fold the plastic carrier as needed to make it suitable to easily get inside the "coronal reservoir." Small portions of “ex tempore" mixed sealer are carried into the "reservoir" until it gets full. It is important to work in constantly slightly wet root canal. Before putting next small portion of MTA or BioAggregate sealer into reservoir, the dentist visually controls the moisture of the sealer mass. If necessary the tip of the plastic carrier is wetted with distilled water and put inside the reservoir to increase the humidity of the sealer mass inside. Thus the risk of drying of material at the bottom of the reservoir is avoided and ceramic sealer is prepared for condensation further inside the root canal.

IL “Capillary condensation” of the sealer to fill the root canal

This stage is valid for both (A and B) types of ceramic sealers. Condensation of the sealer is made with "condensor" — an instrument designed by the authors (Fig. 3). The basic rule is correctly chosen instrument to get freely inside into root canal within 1 mm less than canal’s measured working length (WL). In case of straight canals the number (#) of the instrument must be one number (#) less than MAF. In slightly or severely curved canals the number (#) of the instrument must be two to three numbers (#) less than MAF. It is preferable to use NiTi made instruments, especially in curved canals.

By pushing the condensor slowly in and then getting it out, without taking it totally out of “coronal reservoir," the sealer is condensed inside the canal, aside to canal’s walls and at the same time toward its apical orifice, down to previously defined depth of 1 mm less than WL. Condensation must be done slowly and with maximum possible amplitude of the "push-in" and "take-out" movements (Fig. 4).
When condensing the powder-like ceramic sealers (MTA-based or BioAggregate) that are mixed “ex tempore” before use, there should not be a tactile feeling of “tightening” of the instrument inside the canal during condensation. If such a feeling appears, the dentist must take the condensor totally out of the canal and must wet the tip of the instrument with water before inserting it inside the canal again. The total time for the sealer’s condensation is approximately 10–15 seconds. Between 12 and 15 “push-in/take out” movements are needed to achieve a good filling of the canal’s apical third and to ensure good adhesion of the sealer to canal’s walls, too. Ten seconds after the start of condensation (approximately 10 “push-in” movements) the dentist must take the instrument out of canal. There should not be hardened aggregates on the instrument’s surface, but only liquid white solution. Then one must look at the bottom of the “coronal reservoir.” If there is a “black hole,” this means more water must be added to the sealer inside the reservoir. The tip of plastic carrier is wetted with water and is put inside the reservoir. This is to be immediately followed by adding one more small portion of the mixed sealer into the reservoir. Important note: Do not add water when using bioceramic-based iRoot SP and iRoot BP sealers! Only the additional portion of sealer must be added when using iRoot SP or iRoot BP! These two sealers are supplied premixed and “ready to use” and do not need additional water, they have already been factory mixed to optimal viscosity to fill the canal properly.

III. Insertion of gutta-percha cones
At the moment of choosing the correct size condensor, the dentist must also choose the same size gutta-percha master cone. Inserting of the gutta-percha cone inside the canal will serve three functions simultaneously.

A. It will finish the condensation of the sealer inside the root canal and will make sealer layer along the canal’s length even. It will eliminate any air still entrapped inside the canal, too.

B. It will create a pliable space inside the canal with which to accommodate the stress created by expansion of the ceramic sealers during their hardening. Bioceramic-based sealers BioAggregate, iRoot SP and iRoot BP have significant expansion of 0.20 percent.

C. By inserting the gutta-percha cones the possibility for re-entering the canal is maintained, and easier preparation of calibrated “bed,” for cementing a fiberglass post inside, is ensured.

The master gutta-percha cone is inserted slowly with “push-in” and “take-out” motions down to 1 mm less than WL. Additional smaller diameter gutta-percha cones may be added, if necessary. The ends of gutta-percha cones extending out of the root canal are cut and cones are condensed with round head metal instrument. During gutta-percha condensation excessive water and excessive sealer remnants are also pushed outside and are wiped out with small cotton pellet. A temporary filling is placed in the tooth cavity. After the ceramic sealer is hardened, preferably 24 hours after canals are filled, the final restoration is made.

Clinical application of ‘capillary condensation’ technique
1. Filling with MTA

Fig. 5a Before (Rx made on Nov. 24, 2006)  Fig. 5b After (Rx made on March 30, 2007)  Fig. 6a Before (Rx made on June 8, 2006)  Fig. 6b After (Rx made on June 25, 2006)
Features of ceramic-based endodontic sealers

1. Ceramic-based sealers are highly hydrophilic and have low contact angle. These features allow them to spread easily over the dentin walls of the root canal and to get inside and fill the lateral micro canals, too. Thus necessity to instrument the canals with 06 or higher taper becomes no longer needed. Tooth tissues are preserved, and risk of root fractures is reduced.

Very well-filled lateral micro canals can be seen on experimental samples. Filling is done with iRoot SP (Figs. 12, 13).

2. During setting hard ceramic-based sealers expand. Expansion of BioAggregate and iRoot SP and iRoot BP is significant — 0.20 percent. These new bioceramic sealers also form chemical bond with the canal’s dentin walls. That is why no space is left between the sealer and dentin walls. This is well demonstrated by light polymerization microscopy and much better demonstrated by large magnification scanning.
3. Bioceramic-based sealers are capable of achieving fast alleviation of the pain syndrome in cases of acute periapical inflammation. After appropriate instrumentation and cleaning of the root canal, followed by immediate filling with iRoot SP, pain rapidly diminishes and most often is totally gone within a period of 50 minutes to few hours.

4. In cases of MTA-based materials extrusion outside the root canal is associated with severe pain felt by the patient. When bioceramic-based sealers BioAggregate or iRoot SP are extruded, the pain is relatively small or totally absent. Such lack of pain may be explained with the characteristics of these new materials. During hardening they “produce” hydroxyapatite and after the end of hardening process they exhibit the same features as non-resorbable hydroxyapatite-based bioceramics used for bone replacement in oral surgery. Due to the hydroxyapatite formed, they are also osseoconductive (Figs. 16–18).
5. MTA-based materials and BioAggregate have quite poor radiopacity, different from bioceramic based iRoot SP and iRoot BP sealers. This difference is easily demonstrated by the following experiment. Root canals of extracted teeth have been instrumented with TF files (SybronEndo) and cleaned. Two of the canals were filled with iRoot SP, and the other two with BioAggregate, respectively (Fig. 19). Note the excellent radiopacity of iRoot SP (left) compared to BioAggregate (right).

When roots’ apical thirds of same tooth, which does not contain gutta-percha, were cut and investigated under polarization microscopy, no difference in quality of achieved canal seal have been found (Figs. 20, 21).

Based on the above findings, it is preferable that bioceramic-based iRoot SP sealer be used for “endo-dontic grafting” (i.e., filling of root canals) because of its excellent radiopacity. It is not possible to verify the quality of root canal filling achieved with MTA-based materials or BioAggregate using radiographies only, due to poor radiopacity of these materials.

Discussion
Cantatore define ideal conditions for endodontic sealers as follows:
1. Adequate consistency and adhesion to dentinal walls
2. Adequate working time.
3. Capacity to produce a hermetic seal.
4. Easy handling.
5. Radiopacity.
7. Antibacterial action.
8. Biocompatibility.
9. Insolubility in tissue fluids.
10. To allow retreatment of the canal.
11. Do not discolor dental tissues.
12. No antigenic action.
13. No mutagenic action.

Sealers routinely used in endodontics and based on epoxy resin, calcium hydroxide, glass ionomer, zinc oxide — eugenol, formalin-resorcin pastes, polycaprolactone and Bis-GMA do not meet one or more of above listed requirements.

MTA-based materials (MTA-Angelush, ProRoot — Dentsply, Aureoseal — OGNA) exhibit good adhesion to dentinal walls of root canal, but until recently they required very big enlargement of canal’s apical third to be easily applied. With the method for “capillary condensation” developed by the first author for filling of root canals, these materials became easy to apply into the canal space.

Bioceramic-based materials having nano-sized particles (BioAggregate, iRoot SP, iRoot Bp) achieve excellent adhesion to the canal’s dentinal walls and, more importantly, form a chemical bond with dentin. Structure of these materials during their mixing with water allows a very good consistency to be achieved (BioAggregate) or optimal consistency is already guaranteed by manufacturer by offering premixed “ready-to-use” products (iRoot SP, iRoot BP). All ceramic-based sealers are hardening slowly. This feature gives the dentist the possibility to do corrections of the filling, if control radiography has revealed any problems. Due to their hydrophilicity and low contact angle, all ceramic-based sealers achieve extremely good hermetic seal. All MTA- and bioceramic-based sealers are quite easy to use when the dentist has mastered the “capillary condensation” technique for filling of root canals. MTA-based materials and BioAggregate have poor radiopacity, differently from iRoot SP and iRoot BP. All ceramic-based sealers expand during the time of set. They exhibit potent antimicrobial action, too. All ceramic sealers are biocompatible and insoluble in tissue fluids. They have not demonstrated until now any antigenic or mutagenic action. When used in combination with gutta-percha cones, re-entering of the canal space is possible and a calibrated “bed”
Ceramics-based sealers may be drilled to accommodate a fiberglass post into the canal.

Conclusions

Potent antibacterial activity, absolute biocompatibility, osseoconductivity, ability to achieve excellent hermetic seal in constantly wet environment, formation of chemical bond with dentin, insolubility in tissue fluids, expansion during time of set, very good radiopacity, easy handling are the features that make bioceramic-based sealers an up-to-date alternative to current "golden" standard of multi-phase (gutta-percha — epoxy sealer) warm techniques.

Thanks to its very good features, iRoot SP is currently probably the best product to be used with "capillary condensation" technique for "endodontic grafting" of apical third and for hermetic sealing of complex root canals space.

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References:

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