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**LIFE SCIENCES**

Dentists adopt new cancer screening tool

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Contributing Writer

The Cranston dental practice of Dr. Paul J. Matrullo and Associates has added a new technology that the dentists hope will help save lives by detecting early-stage oral cancer during routine checkups.

The VELscope System, now being offered to all patients, identifies tissue abnormalities using blue light that shows things invisible to the naked eye. Under the light, normal tissue looks apple-green, while abnormal tissues appear darker.

Prior to this technology, detecting oral cancer "was only as accurate as a guess," said Dr. Joseph Matrullo, noting that the only way to detect oral cancer was to look or feel for lumps and irregular tissue changes in the neck, head, cheeks and mouth.

"If something looked suspicious enough, we would proceed with a biopsy," he said. The VELscope, he added, makes detections earlier and more effectively than before, and he's strongly encouraging all smokers in particular to get screened.

There are about 31,000 cases of oral cancer diagnosed each year, and about one in four patients will die from it.

The VELscope can help detect precancerous conditions such as dysplasia early on, maximizing the chances of survival. The system is also helpful, the doctors said, for ongoing surveillance and monitoring of future risks for patients affected and treated for oral cancer.

The VELscope System was created by LED Dental Inc. in conjunction with the British Columbia Cancer agency, which received a \$2.9 million grant from the National Institutes of Health in June 2005 to further study oral pre-cancer management procedures.

Paul J. Matrullo and Associates, in Cranston, was started more than 30 years ago and now includes five doctors, including the founder's son, Dr. Joseph Matrullo, as well as a periodontist and an orthodontist. For more information, go to www.cranstoncosmeticdentist.com.



PHOTO COURTESY DR. PAUL J. MATRULLO AND ASSOCIATES

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