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Ten dentists fielded questions on a 10-phone "smileline" at the Convention Center yesterday as one of the activities of the Academy of General Dentistry's annual meeting. Participating in the event was Dr. Neeta Chesla, left.

## Cosmetic dentistry booming, say experts gathered here

**Invisible braces and tooth whitening  
rank among hot procedures**

By Helen Altonn  
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People who want to feel better about themselves may find the solution in the dentist's chair.

"A nice smile ... gives you self-confidence. It's how you feel about yourself and changes how others perceive you," says Dr. Daniel H. Ward, among 4,200 delegates, including 2,000 dentists, at the Academy of General Dentistry's 50th annual meeting at the Convention Center this week.

Cosmetic dentistry is "very big" now and rapidly developing, said Ward, who has a dental practice in Columbus, Ohio, and teaches at Ohio State University. Actor Tom Cruise has spurred a wave of interest in Invisiline (invisible) braces, which he is sporting behind his famous smile.

"It's a hot area and it allows people trained in general dentistry to do the procedure," Ward said.

Tooth whitening also is in demand. Ward advises seeing a dentist for this rather than experimenting with something from the pharmacy that might have too much acid.

Ward specializes in designing smiles. He analyzes the proportions of a person's teeth from top to bottom and to each other, feeds the numbers into the computer and uses imaging software to get a spreadsheet with the patient's ideal smile.



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Dr. Rosemary Engle practiced with a Waterlase drill while Dr. James Jesse watched yesterday during the annual meeting of the Academy of General Dentistry

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He calls it a "smile blueprint," saying, "I never start the drill until I know exactly what I want it to look like."

Patients should know what they're buying and be able to make informed choices about whitening, bonding, laminates, gum resculpting and other options, he said.

The Academy of General Dentistry emphasizes continuing education, with sessions covering advances in dental technology, treatments and the relationship of teeth and gums to a person's overall health.

Ward said dental decay is declining, especially in fluoridated areas, and dentists are looking "at the bigger picture," focusing more on the total person.

"Dentists truly don't want to see people come in with decay," he said. "The last thing we want to do is fillings on kids. ... The whole purpose is to prevent disease."

He cited exciting developments in dentistry with new materials, bonding agents, "gorgeous" tooth-colored fillings and advanced, painless procedures.

"There is not a good reason not to go to the dentist," he said.

Yesterday, which was Dental Awareness Day, the academy operated a toll-free SmileLine with 120 dentists rotating to answer questions from callers on 10 lines. Staff members said the phones were "ringing off the hook" from 5 a.m. to 5 p.m.

People can post dental questions on the academy's SmileLine Online at [www.agd.org](http://www.agd.org) and a member dentist will answer them.

The convention, which began Thursday, runs through tomorrow.

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