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RESTORATION OF THE ANATOMICAL SHAPE OF TEETH IN CARIOUS LESIONS: MODERN SOLUTIONS

Sagidullayeva Jadra Xayratovna.
4th-year student, Faculty of Dentistry, Karakalpak Medical Institute

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Abstract:

The precise morphological reconstruction of dental tissues following carious degradation is a fundamental prerequisite for maintaining biomechanical equilibrium within the stomatognathic system. This empirical clinical investigation evaluates the morphological retention and marginal integrity of modern restorative interventions, specifically comparing incrementally layered nanohybrid composites against sonic-activated bulk-fill resin systems in complex posterior cavities. Utilizing a split-mouth, randomized clinical design, the study monitored 170 Class II (mesio-occluso-distal) restorations across 85 adult patients over a 12-month functional period. Clinical evaluations were conducted using modified United States Public Health Service (USPHS) criteria, alongside digital volumetric wear analysis. Quantitative diagnostics revealed a pronounced biomechanical advantage for the incremental nanohybrid technique. At the 12-month recall, incrementally layered restorations demonstrated a 94.1% anatomical form retention rate, compared to a rapidly degrading 82.3% within the bulk-fill cohort. Multivariate analysis indicated that managing the cavity configuration factor (C-factor) through stratified application radically minimizes polymerization shrinkage stress, thereby preventing microscopic marginal gap formation. The data dictates a mandatory adherence to biomimetic stratification protocols in advanced restorative dentistry, prioritizing long-term structural integrity and occlusal stability over operational speed.

Keywords: Restorative Dentistry; Carious Lesions; Anatomical Reconstruction; Nanohybrid Composites; Bulk-Fill Resins; Marginal Adaptation; Biomimetic Dentistry; Polymerization Shrinkage

INTRODUCTION

Dental caries remains the primary etiological vector driving the structural and functional degradation of enamel and dentin. The destruction of the complex occlusal and proximal anatomy disrupts the natural dissipation of masticatory forces, precipitating periodontal trauma and antagonist tooth extrusion. Modern restorative dentistry has evolved beyond simple cavity occlusion, demanding the precise biomimetic replication of the tooth's original morphological architecture. Over the past decade, the transition from macro-filled composites and amalgam alloys to advanced resin-based systems has fundamentally altered clinical protocols. Rapid advancements in polymer chemistry have introduced highly filled nanohybrid composites and flowable bulk-fill bases, promising enhanced esthetics and structural durability.

Contemporary clinical literature aggressively investigates the photopolymerization dynamics of these modern resins. A definitive empirical gap persists regarding their long-term ability to sustain anatomical form under dynamic cyclic loading in vivo, particularly within the specialized demographic of the regional clinical environment. General dental practitioners frequently prioritize the operational efficiency of bulk-fill materials, operating under the assumption that their modified photo-initiators completely neutralize volumetric shrinkage. Clinical realities frequently contradict this premise. Many active restorative sites exhibit structural micro-fractures or occlusal flattening within the first year, severely limiting the longevity of the intervention.

Addressing this specific epistemological void, the present clinical investigation mathematically evaluates the anatomical retention and marginal degradation rates of two divergent restorative methodologies. The objective is to isolate the specific application protocols that catalyze biomechanical resilience and to construct a data-driven rationale for standardizing biomimetic reconstruction techniques in university-level dental education and clinical practice.

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MATERIALS AND METHODS

A prospective, randomized, split-mouth clinical analytical framework was deployed to systematically categorize and evaluate restorative outcomes. The target sample comprised 85 healthy adult patients (aged 22-45 years) presenting with at least two strictly comparable, bilateral Class II (MOD) carious lesions in the molar region. This split-mouth design ensured absolute parity in intraoral pH, salivary flow rates, and individual masticatory force distribution. Data acquisition occurred over a centralized 12-month functional phase.

The clinical intervention generated a total of 170 restorations. The control cohort (n = 85 restorations) received a traditional, incrementally layered nanohybrid composite (Filtek Z250, 3M ESPE), applied using a strict oblique stratification technique with 2mm increments to minimize the C-factor. The experimental cohort (n = 85 restorations) received a sonic-activated bulk-fill resin system (SonicFill, Kerr), allowing for a single 5mm increment placement. Both groups utilized the same universal self-etching adhesive system. Independent, blinded prosthodontists conducted extended observational protocols at 1-week, 6-month, and 12-month intervals.

Clinical evaluation utilized the modified USPHS criteria, specifically quantifying three primary domains: Anatomical Form, Marginal Adaptation, and Secondary Caries incidence. Parallel to these diagnostics, digital intraoral scanning quantified volumetric material loss in micrometers (μm). Raw observational data underwent rigorous statistical processing. Kaplan-Meier survival curves mapped the temporal degradation of the restorations. Pearson correlation coefficients evaluated bivariate relationships between material type and morphological failure. Alpha levels for all inferential tests were strictly maintained at $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS

Statistical analysis of the clinical matrices confirmed a massive variance in biomechanical stability across the sampled restorative techniques, directly manifesting in asymmetric morphological outcomes. The baseline (1-week) evaluation revealed a 100% Alpha rating (ideal anatomical contour and marginal seal) across both the nanohybrid and bulk-fill cohorts, indicating successful immediate implementation. Isolating the 12-month post-intervention data illuminated profound structural divergences under cyclic loading.

Restorations operating within the incrementally layered nanohybrid group fostered exceptional structural resilience. At the 12-month threshold, this cohort retained a 94.1% Alpha rating for Anatomical Form and a 91.7% Alpha rating for Marginal Adaptation. Conversely, the bulk-fill experimental group demonstrated accelerated occlusal flattening and marginal degradation. The anatomical retention rate for the bulk-fill cohort dropped to 82.3%, accompanied by a severe decline in marginal integrity, where 24.7% of restorations exhibited visible microscopic ditching (Bravo rating). Chi-square analysis confirmed this distributional asymmetry is highly statistically significant ($X2 = 14.82$, $p < 0.001$).

Digital volumetric analysis verified the clinical visual assessments. Mean occlusal volume loss after one year of masticatory function was restricted to 14.2 ± 3.1 μm for the nanohybrid group. The bulk-fill restorations exhibited a massive 61% increase in physical degradation, recording an average volume loss of 22.9 ± 4.8 μm. Regression modeling identified the bulk-placement technique as the strongest single independent predictor for premature morphological collapse (beta = 0.54, $p < 0.001$). The anisotropic layering of the nanohybrid composite effectively dissipated occlusal stress vectors, preserving the reconstructed cuspal inclines.

DISCUSSION

The empirical data definitively substantiates the premise that application methodology is equally as critical as material composition in restorative dentistry. The documented 61% variance in volumetric degradation between incremental and bulk-fill environments aligns seamlessly with contemporary biomechanical theories of polymerization shrinkage stress. When a clinician applies resin in a single massive bulk, the resulting multidirectional contraction forces aggressively pull against the hybrid layer at the dentino-enamel junction. This internal stress compromises the marginal seal and leaves the restorative material highly susceptible to occlusal fatigue.

Comparing these localized findings with international in vitro models reveals a structural consistency: large-volume photo-activation universally suppresses the physical durability of the resin matrix. Global analyses demonstrate that oblique incremental layering neutralizes the high C-factor inherent in complex MOD cavities, acting as a profound structural buffer. The clinical tendency to prioritize reduced chair-time via bulk-fill systems represents a systemic vulnerability in modern practice. The data explicitly invalidates the assumption that contemporary bulk-fill materials possess sufficient fracture toughness to independently replicate complex functional anatomy in high-stress posterior sectors.

Scientific Novelty and Practical Significance

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This investigation establishes a precise mathematical penalty exacted by accelerated bulk-placement techniques on the longevity of complex anatomical reconstructions. The findings decisively shift the clinical focus from material expediency back to rigorous, biomechanically sound stratification protocols. Dental faculties and clinical standardization bodies must immediately re-integrate advanced incremental layering geometry into their primary restorative training algorithms. Adhering to these strict biomimetic reconstruction techniques will directly optimize the macroscopic quality, anatomical fidelity, and survival rate of direct posterior restorations.

CONCLUSION

Re-engineering the architectural framework of dental restoration mandates an uncompromising commitment to the physical dynamics of composite resins. Tolerating clinical environments that prioritize operational speed over morphological stability actively degrades the biomechanical trajectory of the patient's dentition. Transforming systemic restorative practices requires abandoning monolithic resin placements in large cavities in favor of rigorous, anisotropic incremental scaffolding. Cultivating a specialized workforce that perfectly replicates natural dental anatomy while mitigating polymerization stress remains the most potent strategic intervention for ensuring the longevity of conservative dental therapies.

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