

Water expandable root canal obturation system – A review

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Abstract

Water expandable root canal obturation system has been introduced in endodontics as an alternative to traditional gutta percha based system to obtain an impervious seal. It has properties desirable for root canal obturation such as adhesion to dentin, self-sealing ability based on polymer technology. The most recent advancement in endodontic obturating materials takes advantage of the hydrophilic polymer and the concept of monoblock system in root canal obturation with an aim to improve the marginal seal. Since its introduction, water expandable root canal obturation system has been widely reported to be successful in endodontic therapy. This article aims to provide a brief overview of this new material based on recent scientific studies.

Keywords: Hydrophilic, C-points, Smartpaste bio, obturation, Root canal

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I. Introduction

The most important purpose of root canal obturation is to obtain an impermeable seal.^[1] Though gutta-percha is commonly used as an endodontic obturation material, its ability to laterally seal root canal dentin remains questionable. Gutta-percha lacks adhesiveness and rigidity when it is thin. It undergoes shrinkage on cooling thus, it fails to prevent microleakage. It is hydrophobic in nature and does not strengthen endodontically treated tooth. Hydrophobicity is the major drawback of gutta-percha which inhibits chemical bonding between the gutta-percha and the dentinal wall.^[2] To overcome this drawback and to improve quality of obturation a newer root canal obturating material such as water expandable root canal obturation system has been introduced.

II. History

Water expandable root canal obturating system was introduced by two manufacturers Smartseal DRFP Ltd, Stanford, Prosmart outside UK and Endo Technologies, LLC, Shrewsbury, MA, USA. Dental Root Filling Products Ltd (DRFP Ltd) was set up by a group of British scientists led by Donald James Highgate, Jonathan Anthony Lloyd who got patented for smartseal on May 2007 and identified that hydrophilic polymers could be used to seal irregular shaped spaces.^[3] SmartSeal was launched in October 2007 and after a fantastic start in the UK (and Holland). In late 2010, ProPoint received FDA approval and during 2011 the product was marketed to dentists in the Boston area. In 2011, water expandable root canal obturation system won the Medical Design Excellence Award (MDEA) for the Dental equipment, medical technology community and recognized the technological innovation, ease-of-use.

III. Composition

Water expandable root canal obturation is a two-part system comprising of premade obturation point which is used along with resin based bioceramic sealer as shown in Figure 1. This new obturation point and resin based bioceramic sealer employs technology derived from water-expandable polymers utilized in contact lens.

Obturation points consists of consists of an inner radiopaque nylon core and an outer radiopaque polymer coating.

Central Polyamide Core :

It comprises of a mixture of two proprietary nylon polymers

- Trogamid T

- Trogamid CX.

This provides the point with the flexibility to allow it to easily pass around any curves in the prepared root canal, while being rigid enough to pass easily to length in narrower canals.

Core materials are also used in dental implant abutments, dental bridges and crown cores as well as in surgical sutures.

Outer bonded hydrophilic Polymer Layer :

It comprises of a cross-linked copolymer of acrylonitrile and vinyl pyrrolidone which has been polymerized and cross-linked using allyl-methacrylate and a thermal initiator. This hydrophilic, hydrogel layer allows obturating point to swell so that it adapts to the ramifications of the root canal. Zirconium dioxide particles provide the radiopacity to both the core material.^[4]

Water expandable Obturating points have a central white core (Radiopaque core) and translucent coating (radiolucent coating). This hydrophilic obturating point is commercially available as (Propoint/ C- Points) (Endo Technologies, LLC, Shrewsbury, MA, USA). C-points, C stands for the Latin word "Cresco" (creto), which means to grow, expand or increase.



Figure 1A

It is available in several tip sizes and tapers. One obturating point covers all tip sizes and it's available within the following sizes:^[5]

6% taper - 25 to 45 (ISO tip sizes)

4% taper - 25 to 45 (ISO tip sizes)

ProTaper™ - F1 to F5

Sendoline™ S5 - S2 to S4.

Root canal Sealer

Sealer recommended with hydrophilic obturating point is a resin-based bioceramic sealer designed to swell through the addition of ground polymer. It contains zirconium oxide, monobasic calcium phosphate, calcium silicates, calcium hydroxide, and filler. The manufacturer claims that bioceramics addition to sealer gives dimensional stability which makes it non-resorbable inside the root canal system. It is dispensed in a syringe to ensure an accurate ratio of sealer components is achieved every time and mixing/dispensing trays are provided to aid application. The sealant is delivered through a pre-mixed syringe and mixing is not required as it can be applied directly into the canal using an intra-canal tip thus minimizing wastage of material.^[6] This resin-based bioceramic sealer is commercially available as Smart paste Bio (Smartseal™) or HySeal-bio.



Figure 1B

Accessories

Smart trim

It consists of a kit of two long flame gold burs and a couple of pear-shaped diamond burs for trimming the excess of propoints.

Smart gauge

It is a measuring block which is designed to trim the 4% and 6% taper propoints to the apical desired size. Thus it reduces the need to carry large stocks of pretrimmed points and also allows a custom size fitting. Selected obturation point should be trimmed to one size less than that has been prepared, i.e. if a size 40 has been prepared, then the propoint should be trimmed to a size 35. Trimming is done gradually by pushing the point through the corresponding hole present within the smartgauge and cutting off excess with help of scalpel blade. The points are rigid enough to be cut at the apex as snug fit is felt with positive tug back at the correct working length. The smartgauge is autoclavable at the usual settings.^[7]

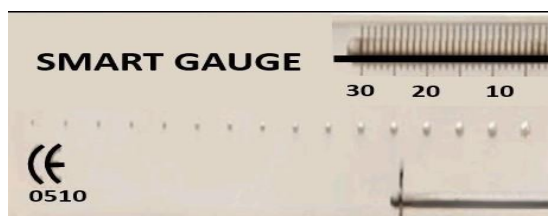


Figure 1C

IV. Properties Of Water Expandable Root Canal Obturation System

Biocompatibility

Eid AA *et al.* (2013) evaluated biocompatibility of C-Point and commercially available gutta-percha points using a rat odontoblast-like cell line (MDPC-23) by measuring cell viability and mineralization potential of MDPC-23 cells. Author concluded that C-Point biocompatibility is comparable to gutta-percha with minimal adverse effects on osteogenesis after elution of potentially toxic components.^[8]

Bueno CR *et al.* (2016) evaluated biocompatibility and mineralization ability of the endodontic sealers in the rat subcutaneous tissue response to implanted polyethylene tubes filled with Smartpaste Bio, Acroseal. They concluded that all tested sealers were found to be biocompatible. All sealers induced biomineralization except Acroseal, which induced a mild tissue reaction.^[9]

Push out bond strength:

Economides N, Gogos C, Kodonas K, Beltes C, Kolokouris I. (2011) evaluated push-out bond strength of water expandable root canal obturation system and compared it with gutta-percha/AH- 26. They concluded that there was no significant differences between mean bond strengths of various groups, thus indicating that there was no difference in adhesion to dentine between the Smartseal system and gutta-percha/AH- 26 applied using either single cone or lateral condensation technique.^[10]

Hedge V, Arora S (2015) evaluated bond strength of Smart-Seal system to root canal dentin and concluded that water expandable root canal obturation may improve bond strength with UA (ultrasonic activation) in the coronal and middle thirds and Manual dynamic activation /EndoActivator in the apical third.^[11]

Hedge V, Arora S (2015) evaluate the effects of intracanal medicaments such as calcium hydroxide, triple and double antibiotic pastes on the push out bond strength of Smart-Seal obturation with Bio-ceramic sealer to the root canal dentin and concluded that The double antibiotic pastes and calcium hydroxide did not affect the bond strength of the novel hydrophilic obturating system. Triple antibiotic pastes improved the bond strength of Smart-Seal system in the middle and apical thirds.^[12]

Abdelaziz SE, Fawzy MI, Bastawy HA (2019) assess the effect of 17% ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid (17% EDTA) and 0.2% Chitosan as chelating agents on bond strength of CPoint obturation system to root canal dentin and concluded that 17% EDTA when used as final rinse produced higher bond strength with CPoint obturation system compared to 0.2% chitosan, especially at the middle third.^[13]

Expansion

Didato A, Eid AA, Levin MD, Khan S, Tay FR, Rueggeberg FA. (2013) compared time-based lateral expansion of two sizes i.e 25 and 40 size of water expandable root canal obturation points with a similar-sized gutta-percha point at various distances from the root apex. Water expandable obturating Points/ Propoints shows dimensional changes which were significantly higher for both sizes at each tip distance after 20 min of water immersion but gutta-percha did not significantly show dimensional change from the dry value during water immersion. The expansion of this new hydrophilic obturation points is complete within 20 minutes, a time period in which most root canal sealers still exhibit flow during setting. It can expand up to around 17% with the same X-ray appearance as with conventional root canal obturation materials.^[14]

The delayed hygroscopic expansion of the obturation points when coated with a hydrophilic sealer that impedes water sorption may partially compensate for the gaps arising from sealer dissolution.^[15]

Rajkumar B, Tekriwal S, Kumar A, Gupta V (2016) compared the immediate and delayed volumetric changes of ProPoint, Thermafil and Gutta Flow using CBCT. There was an expansion seen in ProPoint system 44% after four hours of obturation and Gutta Flow shows expansion 8.9% that is much less than that of propoints whereas 9.8% contraction seen in Thermafil.^[16]

Tekriwal S and Kumar A (2017) evaluated the immediate and delayed volumetric changes after obturation with ProPoint using CBCT immediately and after four hours of obturation. It was found that there was a considerable amount of expansion after four hours of obturation due to the swellable nature of the sealer and the obturating ProPoint. Volumetric expansion of 13-27% approximately was observed.^[17]

Microleakage

Hegde V and Arora S (2015) compared sealing ability of a novel hydrophilic versus conventional hydrophobic obturation systems using a bacterial leakage study and found that hydrophilic obturations of the root canal shows a better resistance to bacterial leakage as compared to hydrophobic obturations.^[18]

The single- cone technique utilize taper that matches with Propoint PT which is used with Smartpaste bio showed the lowest amount of glucose leakage.^[19]

Marya N, Datta A, Handa S, Singh R, Khurana C. (2015) compared the sealing abilities of a newer unique obturating material (PropointPT) with conventionally available materials (Gutta Percha, Thermafil and Resilon). PropointPT obturating material showed microleakage value of 0.0128 $\mu\text{l}/\text{min}/\text{cm H}_2\text{O}$ which was less when compared with other obturation systems but still did not show complete sealing.^[20]

Vats A, Farva U, Paliwal A, Bharadawaj K, Chhabra HS, Singh A. (2019) evaluate the apical leakage of hydrophilic and hydrophobic obturation systems using a dye penetration method under stereomicroscope and concluded that sealing to apical leakage shown by hydrophilic obturation systems was significantly better as compared to hydrophobic obturation systems, though none of the obturation systems were found out to be completely devoid of leakage.^[21]

Fracture resistance

Hedge V and Arora S (2015) compared fracture resistance of roots which is obturated with three different hydrophilic systems such as water expandable root canal obturation system, Resilon/Epiphany system, and EndoSequence BC sealer and one hydrophobic gold standard gutta-percha/AH Plus system and concluded that in contrast to hydrophobic systems, hydrophilic systems showed higher fracture resistance.^[2]

Elayed MA, Elgendy AA. (2017) compared fracture resistance of roots obturated either with water expandable root canal obturation system (PropointPT cone and Smart-paste Bio sealer) or with gutta-percha in combination with either MTA Fillapex or AH Plus sealers and concluded that water expandable root canal obturation system improved the fracture resistance of the endodontically treated roots more than MTA Fillapex/gutta-percha or AH Plus/gutta-percha combinations.^[22]

Retreatment

Hegde V, Murkey L (2017) evaluated the remaining novel hydrophilic (smartseal system) and conventional hydrophobic obturating material (gutta-percha) on the walls of root canals after retreatment under scanning electron microscopy (SEM) and concluded that none of the tested obturating systems could be completely removed from root canal walls however hydrophilic obturating system was difficult to retrieve as compared to hydrophobic system.^[23]

Prasad A, Nair RS, Angelo JM, Mathai V, Vineet RV, Christopher SR. (2018) compare the retrievability of gutta-percha (GP), Resilon, and CPoints, using Protaper and Mtwo rotary retreatment systems and concluded that canals obturated with CPoints and bioceramic sealer are the least retreatable among the study groups.^[24]

pH > 7

AbuZeid STH, Mokeemsaleh AAY (2019) conducted an *in vitro* study revealed that the solubility of resin based bioceramic sealer i.e smartpaste bio promotes alkalinity and calcium release superior to that with a MTA-based sealer after setting time.^[25]

Setting time – 4-10hr

ADA/ANSI Specification # 78

Handling and setting characteristics of water expandable root canal sealer⁵

Parameter	Acceptable Limit Results (ISO 6876:2001 & ANSI/ADA Specification # 57)	Values for bioceramic sealer (smartpaste bio)
Flow	Not less than 20mm	44mm
Working time	Not less than 90% stated by manufacturer	35 mins at 37°C
Setting time	Within range stated by manufacturer	45 mins at 37°C
Film thickness	Not more than 50 µm	3.3 µm
Solubility	Shall not exceed 3%	0.0324%
Radiopacity	Not less than 3mm Al equivalent	15.4mmAl equivalent

V. Mechanism Of Action

Water expandable root canal obturation system is a point-and-paste root canal obturation technique that consists of premade, hydrophilic obturation points and an accompanying sealer. The principle of water expandable root canal obturation system is based mainly on its hydrophilic nature which can absorb surrounding moisture and expand resulting in filling of voids and spaces thus providing an impermeable seal.^[26] The obturation points consist of a core coated with a radiopaque hydrophilic polymer layer allows the point to swell and adapt the canal wall by expanding laterally because the polyamide coating is present only laterally not axially. Lateral expansion of obturation points occurs by absorbing moisture and dihydrogen monoxide present in the instrumented canal space form a hydrogen bond to the polar sites present, enabling expansion within the polymeric chains.

The lateral expansion of obturating point is non-uniform, with its expansion mainly depends on the extent to which the hydrophilic polymer is prestressed (i.e., contact with a canal wall will reduce the rate or extent of polymer expansion).^[27] The expansion occurs with a miniscule force that is claimed to be well below the reported tensile stress of dentine. This expansion mostly occurs within first four hours after placing the obturating point into the root canal wall which allows polymer and sealer being enter into the dentinal tubules. The slight positive pressure against the root canal wall that is created forms a seal that is believed to be virtually impermeable to bacterial microleakage. A polymeric obturation point takes advantage of dentinal fluid and induces nonisotropic lateral expansion to adapt to canal irregularities thereby enhancing the sealing ability of the root canal obturation, finally reducing the possibility of reinfection and potentiating the long-term success of root canal treatment. As claimed by the manufacturer, although obturation point is capable of achieving a relative good fit of an irregular canal space, gaps may still remain between the root canal walls and the expanded point. Consequently, an accompanying sealer must be used to seal those areas.^[28] A bioceramic resin based sealer which produces calcium hydroxide along with hydroxyapatite as byproducts of setting reaction rendering the material both anti-bacterial and biocompatible. It is hydrophilic in nature, allowing the propoint to hydrate and swell to fill any voids. This cement absorbs water present within the canal and once set bioceramic resin based sealer produces a radiopaque biocompatible cement. It gives less voids and greater efficiency in filling simulated lateral canals and a comparable homogeneity of obturation using water expandable obturation system over Gutta-percha.^[29] The water expandable root canal obturation system bonds with dentine inside the root canal forms a superior seal by secondary monoblock effect. Such improved sealing ability can be attributed to its self- expansion property.

VI. Obturation Technique

Water expandable root canal obturation system is consists of polyamide polymer cones and a resin sealer with additional polymer powder to be mixed during manipulation of the sealer.

- Select the correct hydrophilic obturation point that matches size of final master apical file which is used to complete canal preparation.
- Try in the selected obturation Point to ensure it reaches full working length and have adequate tug-back. If the point passes beyond the working length then trim apical portion to correct length. If the obturation point doesn't go to desired length then either use final master apical file again to ensure adequate shape or use a smaller size obturation point.
- With apex locator or take a radiograph to confirm the desired position of the hydrophilic obturation point.

- Irrigate canals with saline three times prior to insertion of the system. If this regime is followed, the remaining value of 0.01% sodium hypochlorite will have no effect on the safety and effectiveness and undiluted 17% EDTA has shown to have no effect on the system.
- Bioceramic resin based sealer is a pre-mixed sealer paste that can be introduced into coronal 2/3 of canal using provided syringetips.
- Obturation point is introduced into the canal to desired working length using tweezers following that a slow firm pressure is applied to allow the point to evenly distribute the sealer down into the canal.
- Tooth can then be restored immediately using any conventional restorative material.^[6] Figure 1,2,3



Figure 1D Preoperative radiograph of mandibular first molar and post operative radiograph of the tooth obturated with water expandable root canal obturation

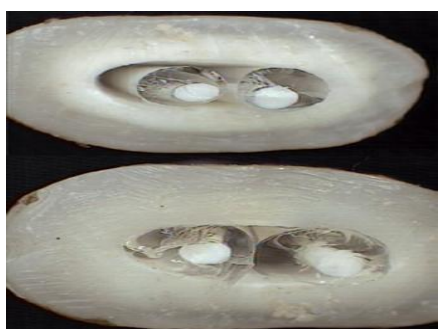


Figure 2 Smartseal points with hydrophilic polymer swelling laterally (Note polymer is colourless and expansion of polymer is clearly visible for illustrative purposes)

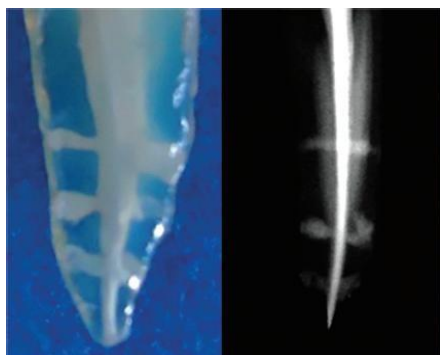


Figure 3 Photographic and radiographic analysis of Polyamide polymer obturation.

Source:

[Figure - 1] www.Semantic scholar.org

[Figure -2] Tomson RM, Polycarpou N, Tomson PL. Contemporary obturation of the root canal system. British dental journal. 2014 Mar;216(6):315-22.

[Figure - 3] www.researchgate.net

VII. Advantages

- Hydrophilic, Radioopaque
- Does not shrink on setting
- Biocompatible, non-mutagenic and non-cytotoxic with antimicrobial properties
- Hydrophilic obturation points are self-sealing as it expands or swells to fill voids and lateral canals
- Improves the fracture resistance of roots
- Used with bio-active sealer and has osteoinductive property
- Increased pushout bond strength

- Strengthen endodontically treated teeth
- Geometry of point can be accurately made
- Controlled expansion
- Compatible to use with protaper and sendoline file
- Single-cone, one-step obturation device
- Simplicity of use

VIII. Disadvantages

- Minimal supporting clinical data
- Difficult retreatment
- Limited evidence of effectiveness
- Expensive

IX. Conclusion

The selection of suitable obturating material is important in successful endodontic therapy. Proper root canal filling technique along with obturating material and sealer will ensure a complete seal of the root canal. Hydrophilic obturating system is significantly superior to the hydrophobic obturating system, as far as the sealing ability is concerned. Hence, hydrophilicity should be of paramount importance when selecting an obturating system. Considering the composition and the properties of water-expandable root canal obturation system, it provides a solution to many of the drawbacks which encountered with the use of conventional gutta-percha obturation system such as coronal and apical microleakage, inadequate adaptation of core material to root canal dentin, hydrophobic nature, inadequate bioactive property and inability to reinforce the root canal treated tooth. Thus, it can be used as an alternative to gutta-percha. Most of the recent studies done on water-expandable root canal obturation system are *in vitro*, need and necessity calls for more clinical studies to establish its long-term use.

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