The longevity of dental restorations: a systematic review
NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination

Record Status
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Citation

Authors' objectives
1. To assess whether there are variations in the longevity and the cost of the different routine dental restorations. 2. To establish the factors that influence the longevity of routine dental restorations.

Authors' conclusions
Dental fillings do not last forever; over 60% of all restorative dentistry is for the replacement of fillings.

There is a large choice of materials that can be used for fillings. Many are introduced into the market place and used on patients with very limited evidence that they are more effective or efficient than existing materials. This has created high levels of uncertainty about the merits of different materials currently in use.

Dental amalgam is the material of choice unless aesthetics are very important. It lasts longest and is the cheapest. Unless there is a contra-indication (which is usual aesthetics or pregnancy), it is recommended for routine use wherever possible.

The life span of fillings achieved in better quality research studies suggests that routine clinical practice may be producing sub-optimal results.

Work is needed to establish means of improving the quality of routine practice, putting in place incentives to promote cost-effective care and identifying the resource implications.

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