

NOVEL BALL HEAD SCREW AND SCREWDRIVER DESIGN FOR IMPLANT-SUPPORTED PROSTHESES WITH ANGLED CHANNELS. A FINITE ELEMENT ANALYSIS

Ball head screw and screwdriver for angled channels

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Conflicts of interest

The authors have conflicts of interest, as patent registrations have been obtained for the external connection [BHS30 EXTERNAL: WO/2009/150350] and for the internal component [UBH INTERNAL: US8978525 / EP2420354 B1 / CN102395447 B].

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ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study was to design the optimal geometry of a novel screwdriver; create the grooves on a ball head screw; and demonstrate its resistance to a torque of up to 40 Ncm at an angulation of 0, 15 and 30 degrees by using nonlinear finite element analysis. A secondary objective was to create a fool-proof and easily recognizable system.

The grooved ball head screw and geometry of the screwdriver, functioning from an angulation of 0° to 30°, was generated using Pro-ENGINEER Wildfire 5.0 software. Static structural analyses between bodies in contact were performed at different angles of 0°, 15° and 30° at a torque of 20 Ncm and 40 Ncm, using nonlinear finite element simulation by means of ANSYS 12.0.

The maximum stress supported by the ball head screw and screwdriver was similar at 20 Ncm and 40 Ncm. Although greater deformations were found at 40 Ncm, these were small and might not affect the performance of the system. Besides, the rupture torque value for the M2 connection was 55 Ncm for 0° and 30°, and 47.5 Ncm for 15°.

Numerical simulation showed that the ball head system design can achieve the mechanical strength requirements expected for screws used in implant-supported restorations at an angulation of up to 30°.

Finite element analysis showed this novel ball head screw and screwdriver system to be a good solution for angled screw channels in implant-supported prostheses.

Key words: Ball head screw, angled screw channel, finite element analysis, torque, preload, screw mechanics.

INTRODUCTION

Dental implants have been reported to be highly successful in treating completely ^[1,2] and partially edentulous patients ^[3-5].

Screw-retained prostheses were initially used for partial or full-arch rehabilitations ^[1,2,6], whereas single-tooth reconstructions were generally cemented on prefabricated abutments ^[7]. Both types of reconstructions exhibited satisfactory long-term clinical outcomes ^[1,8]. However, due to the need to customize prosthetic components to improve aesthetic outcomes or to correct angled implants, new components such as the cast-on UCLA abutment were developed for both screw- and cement-retained single-tooth reconstructions ^[9,10].

An accurate implant position is mandatory when screw-retained reconstructions are used, in order to achieve an optimal location of the screw access hole and to obtain good esthetic results. Reconstructions cemented on angulated abutments are the current solution to implants placed in an improper position or tilted implants placed to avoid sensitive structures or anatomical cavities ^[11-13]. However, screw-retained reconstructions seem to be preferable, as they are more easily retrievable, therefore facilitating the treatment of technical and biological complications ^[14-16].

The angulation of the screw channel to correct emergence of the prosthetic screw access hole constitutes an alternative to cemented reconstructions on tilted implants. This would allow the dentist and the dental technician to use screw-retained reconstructions despite the implant position. A special screwdriver with the capability to apply torque to the screw in an angled channel should be used ^[17,18]. It would be truly beneficial to develop a fool-proof new screw head and screwdriver system for use in screw-retained

reconstructions with angled channels. This system should be able to achieve the recommended torque of 30 Ncm, even in the hardest situation of an angulation of 30°.

Nonlinear finite element analysis (FEA) has become an increasingly powerful tool for predicting stress and strain within structures in a real situation ^[19]. It has been successfully applied to assess the mechanical characteristics of different implant- and tooth-abutment connections ^[20,21].

The primary objective of this study was to design the optimal geometry of a novel screwdriver; create the grooves on a ball head screw; and demonstrate its resistance to a torque of up to 40 Ncm at an angulation of 0, 15 and 30 degrees by using nonlinear FEA. A secondary objective was to create a fool-proof and easily recognizable system.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Design concept

The concept behind the patented screw and screwdriver design called Ball Head System (BHS) is a spherical dented structure (Figure 1). The screw head constitutes the male component of the connection. The screwdriver, representing the female component, was designed to perfectly match the screw head from an angulation of 0° to 30°.

Final design

To design the optimal geometry of the screwdriver, the transmission angle formed between the force direction and absolute speed at the contact point between two bodies was taken as a key design parameter. Minimizing the transmission angle helps to improve load transmission and reduces the chances of stripping. If the transmission angle is 0°, the transmission function is satisfactory [22]. The contact surface between the screw head and the screwdriver must be radial to guarantee a 0° transmission angle. Radial lines represent contact surfaces between two bodies, where the contact force is normal to the surfaces involved. Linear speed in a circular movement is perpendicular to the radius. Hence, the angle between the force and speed direction is 0°, and the relationship between angles when the screwdriver is activated as follows: $\beta = \text{atan}(\tan \alpha / \cos \gamma)$ (Figure 2).

Two factors were taken into consideration for determining the final number of grooves in the screw head. Firstly, the number of grooves had to ensure that the forces were well balanced even if the screw and screwdriver were not well aligned, thus reducing the chance of stripping. Additionally, the number of grooves had to be sufficient to guarantee a proper gear between screw and screwdriver. Secondly, the material left between grooves had to be sufficient to withstand the forces applied without easy stripping. The optimal number of grooves was finally defined as four because with only two grooves, a proper

152 gear between screw and screwdriver was not possible at certain inclination angles, while
153 with 6 grooves the width between grooves was too small.

154 In order to build up the final geometry, a standard M2 abutment screw size was taken as
155 a sample. Figure 3 shows the whole process for finally creating the system. First, the
156 screwdriver was designed. In order to guarantee a perfect gear between the screw head
157 and the screwdriver, a generation method was then applied. An assembly containing all
158 possible positions of the screw head was created. The following step involved cutting the
159 negative part of the groove to obtain the positive part of the groove on the sphere. Finally,
160 the head was attached to the body of the screw. The final geometry can be seen in Figure
161 4. These geometries were generated using Pro-ENGINEER Wildfire 5.0 (PTC
162 Corporation, MA, USA).

163 **Analysis scenario**

164 Non-linear FEA was performed to verify that this screwdriver and screw system is viable.

165 The material of choice for the screwdriver was steel 17-4PH, with a tensile yield strength
166 of 1090 MPa and an ultimate tensile strength of 1210 MPa. Steel 17-4PH is an alloy
167 containing 0.04% carbon, 0.25% silicon, 0.40% manganese, 15.30% chromium, 4.50%
168 nickel, 3.25% copper and 0.3% niobium, and is also subjected to thermal treatment
169 (reheating for dissolution). On the other hand, the screw was analyzed using a Ti6Al4V
170 grade 5 alloy containing 6% aluminum and 4% vanadium, with a tensile yield strength of
171 970 MPa and an ultimate tensile strength of 1100 MPa ^[23].

172 The screwdriver and screw connection were analyzed as a static structure at and
173 angulation of 0°, 15°, and 30°. Additionally, two torque values were analyzed for each
174 angulation (20 Ncm, and the worst case scenario of 40 Ncm), and the rupture torque was
175 calculated using an iterative process.

176 For the loading conditions, the screw was fixed at its base while the torque was applied
177 to the top of the screwdriver. The analysis was performed within the elastic range. If the
178 stress was higher than the yield strength, the analysis was performed within the plastic
179 range. In this case, the screw and the screwdriver were analyzed separately (first the screw
180 and then the screwdriver); otherwise, the result would not converge.

181 A different mesh for the screw and screwdriver was generated for each inclination angle,
182 as it was refined around the contact points in order to increase accuracy (Figure 5). Table
183 1 shows the number of nodes and elements used for the screw and screwdriver mesh. The
184 element size ranged from 0.4-0.05 mm, depending on the inclination and the torque
185 applied.

186 The finite element analysis was performed by means of ANSYS v12 software (ANSYS
187 Inc., PA, USA).

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197 **RESULTS**

198 The nonlinear FEA yielded the following results.

199 **Stress distribution**

200 As seen in Figure 6, stress distribution was different for each inclination. However, in all
201 cases, the maximum stress points at the screwdriver were located at the contact points on
202 the teeth. Similarly, the maximum stress points at the screw head were also located at the
203 contact points on the grooves and at its base.

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205 **Maximum stress analysis**

206 Table 2 summarizes the maximum equivalent Von Mises stress obtained for each torque
207 and angle of inclination. As can be seen, at 20 Ncm and 0°, the maximum stresses at the
208 screw head and screwdriver were within the elastic range. However, in all the other cases
209 the maximum stresses were higher than the yield strength, creating permanent
210 deformations.

211 Probably due to the gentle slope, the maximum stresses for 20 Ncm and 40 Ncm were
212 very similar. Although the deformations beyond 40 Ncm were greater, they were still
213 very small and might not affect the operation of the screw and screwdriver. Nonetheless,
214 mechanical tests with a prototype would be needed to confirm this.

215 It is worth noting that maximum stress and deformation on the screwdriver were higher
216 at 15° than at 0° and 30°.

217 **Rupture stress analysis**

218 Table 3 shows the minimum rupture torque of a series of iterative analyses for each
219 angulation, with the purpose of establishing the maximum torque causing rupture tensions
220 in one of the two elements of the connection.

221 As can be seen, at 0° and 30° the screwdriver required significantly more torque to fail.
222 In this case, the screwdriver was close to its strength limit, while the screw had more than
223 50 MPa of margin. Nevertheless, at 15° both the screw and screwdriver were very close
224 to their failure limit.

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240 **DISCUSSION**

241 Finite element analysis has been the most common and powerful tool for simulating
242 dental restorations under various loading conditions ^[19]. It has also been extensively used
243 to predict the biomechanical performance of various dental implant designs ^[24], as well
244 as the effect of clinical factors on implant success ^[25]. According to Geng et al. ^[26], the
245 results obtained from FEA are a good starting point and, could be extrapolated to clinical
246 situations, with due consideration of the limitations of the method.

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248 However, most previous reports lack rigorousness in model construction ^[20,27]. Thus, in
249 the present study a different mesh for each inclination angle for both the screw and the
250 screwdriver was generated. Moreover, refinement around the contact points was made to
251 increase accuracy (Figure 5). Some other variables such as screw threads, abutment,
252 implant and surrounding bone were ignored to ensure that screw head and screwdriver
253 connection behavior was the only variable in this investigation. In this regard, our results
254 may be extrapolated to other metrics and fields where accessibility and angulation are
255 needed.

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257 Within the limitations of the methodology used in this study, the results of the numerical
258 simulation showed that the Ball Head System (BHS) could improve and easily achieve
259 the required mechanical strength for screws used in screw-retained reconstructions with
260 angled channels, even in the hardest situation of an angulation of 30°. Our study
261 confirmed that both the required nominal torque of 20 Ncm and the required maximum
262 torque of 40 Ncm were achieved. Based on iterations to determine the maximum torque
263 which the connection was able to support, we demonstrated that with an angulation of 0°
264 and 30° the screwdriver broke first at 55 Ncm, though at 15° the screw broke at 47.5 Ncm.

265 These rupture torques should be taken as an approximation and should be checked
266 experimentally by means of torsion testing of the connection. Nevertheless, this would
267 not constitute rupture *per se*, but rather a permanent deformation of the groove. There
268 would be no danger of rupture of the screw head, because the slots required for removal
269 would still be intact and it could be unscrewed.

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271 A possible underestimation of the results obtained by FEA needs to be clarified. The
272 material limits used for FEA are obtained from tensile tests. However, the screw and
273 screwdriver connection is under compression and shear stress, which offers higher limits
274 than under tensile stress conditions. The goodness of the model can be summarized as a
275 realistic geometrical structure and elastoplastic model for the material description,
276 affording correct definition of the contacts and the existing tolerance among the different
277 system components, and with good reproduction of the preloading stress condition ^[28].

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279 Few studies have addressed the influence of screw head design tested over a range of
280 angles of application of the respective screwdriver, the torque value at which the screw
281 head strips, or the torque at which screwdriver engagement fails. Spencer et al. ^[29] tested
282 the behavior of titanium screws with four different head designs under different
283 angulations. These screw head designs did not reach optimal torque values with
284 increasing angulation. At 30°, slot and cross screw head designs were those which
285 achieved a maximum torque value of 23.4 Ncm and 19.4 Ncm, respectively. Due to the
286 fact that those designs were not specifically designed for applying torque with an
287 angulation, the application of an axial force (amount of force applied to each screw along
288 its axis) by the examiner proved necessary. This force increased with increasing
289 angulation in order to maintain the radial force (amount of force at the screw head).

290 Hence, the BHS was designed with a transmission angle of 0° in order to achieve a
291 minimum axial force and improve load transmission and patient comfort.

292 The use of tilted implants is an alternative to bone augmentation and sinus lift ^[30], and no
293 negative effects have been seen in terms of implant survival or marginal bone loss
294 compared to straight implants ^[31]. The BHS allows the application of 30 Ncm torque to
295 screw-retained reconstructions with angled channels. Thus, it could become a good
296 solution to solve esthetic demands and nonparallel situations between the axial direction
297 of the superstructure and the implant. Besides, some publications ^[17,18] have shown that
298 clinicians use the angled screw channel with suboptimal screw and screwdriver designs,
299 implying a potential risk of damaging the screw head. This is an indicator that BHS offers
300 the required solution, and is safe and easy to recognize.

301 Following the satisfactory results of the numerical simulation of BHS comprising a ball
302 head screw and screwdriver, the next step should be to perform mechanical tests. These
303 would help to obtain much more reliable data in terms of the static test, and to analyze
304 the behavior of BHS under fatigue conditions with the aim of validating its use for
305 implant-supported prosthesis.

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313 CONCLUSIONS

314 Within the limitations of this study, the following conclusions can be drawn:

315 • The Ball Head System (BHS) is a state-of-the-art design composed of a ball head
316 screw and screwdriver designed with the most severe requirements, and especially
317 indicated for implant-supported restorations with angled channels.

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319 • Numerical simulation showed that the BHS design can achieve the mechanical
320 strength requirements expected for screws used in implant-supported restorations at
321 an angulation of up to 30°.

322 • The ball head screw design is exclusive and easily recognizable by the operator, which
323 ensures use of the right screwdriver, preventing potential damage to the screw head.

324 • Further research based on mechanical evaluation is required to validate the accuracy
325 of this novel ball head screw and screwdriver system for implant-supported
326 prosthesis.

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329 LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

330 - UCLA: acronym of “University of California at Los Angeles”. It is a cast component
331 used to create a custom abutment for a prosthesis.

332 - FEA: Finite element analysis.

333 - BHS: Ball Head System.

334 - Ncm: Newton centimeter. Torque unit.

335 - MPa: mega pascal. Strength unit.

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455 **TABLES**

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	Screw		Screwdriver	
Angulation	Nodes	Elements	Nodes	Elements
20 Ncm				
0°	13001	7822	13001	7822
15°	21374	13082	14790	8967
30°	38933	25653	38975	25638
40 Ncm				
0°	13001	7822	13001	7822
15°	18406	11356	14790	8967
30°	39241	25823	39241	25823

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459 **Table 1.** Number of nodes and elements used for the screw and screwdriver mesh.

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Angulation	Screw maximum stress (MPa)	Screwdriver maximum stress (MPa)	Screw maximum deformation (mm)	Screwdriver maximum deformation (mm)
At 20 N cm				
0°	796.9	1037.3	0.0093	0.0042
15°	1040.3	1141.1	0.018	0.058
30°	1041.5	1103.9	0.011	0.046
At 40 N cm				
0°	996.0	1145.8	0.019	0.085
15°	1048.6	1159.2	0.03	0.213
30°	1067.6	1153.8	0.039	0.11

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468 **Table 2.** Maximum tensions in relation to torque.

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Angulation	Torque (Ncm)	Screw maximum stress (MPa)	Screwdriver maximum stress (MPa)
0°	55	1048.0	1184.6
15°	47.5	1092.9	1182.5
30°	55	1049	1202.5

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478 **Table 3.** Minimum rupture torque.

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492 **FIGURE CAPTIONS**

493 **Figure 1. Screw and screwdriver design.** Left: ball screw head; Right: screwdriver.

494 **Figure 2. Optimal geometry of the screw and screwdriver.** Left: diagram of force and
495 linear speed. Due to the radial contact surfaces, the transmission angle is 0° ; Right: angles
496 influencing angular misalignment.

497 **Figure 3. Generation of the final geometry.** Step 1: the screwdriver geometry was
498 generated; Step 2: the generation method was used to create a geometry which includes
499 all the possible positions of the screwdriver around a spherical screw head from 0° to 30° ;
500 Step 3: the negative part of the generated groove was cut, obtaining the positive part of
501 the generated groove; Step 4: the geometry obtained in Step 3 was used to make a cut to
502 the sphere to obtain the final screw head geometry; Step 5: the screw head was attached
503 to the body of the screw.

504 **Figure 4. Final geometry of the screw and screwdriver.** Left: final geometry of the
505 screw head; Right: final geometry of the screwdriver.

506 **Figure 5. Different meshes for the screw and screwdriver generated for each**
507 **inclination angle to increase accuracy.** Left: sphere used to refine the mesh around the
508 contact point at an inclination angle of 15° ; Middle: screw and screwdriver mesh; Right:
509 refinement of the screw mesh at the contact point.

510 **Figure 6. Stress distribution for each inclination.** Von Miss equivalent stresses at 0° ,
511 15° and 30° , and at 40 Ncm of torque. At 20 Ncm the stress distribution was similar;
512 however, the absolute stress values were different.

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